

YOGA

It's Practice & Philosophy

According to the Upanishads

##

English Exposition by:-

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia

Ayodhya (Faizabad, U.P.)

Full address of Author—36-A, Rajghat Colony, Parikrama Marg,
P.O.—Ayodhya, Pin—224123
Distt.—Faizabad, U.P. India.

Mobile: +919451290400, +919935613060

Website: < www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com >

Email of Author: (i) < ajaichhawchharia@gmail.com >

(ii) < ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com >

Facebook ID < www.facebook.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia8 >

Linkedin: www.linkedin.com/AjaiKumarChhawchharia

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Note: Some of the Upanishads narrated in this section of the book also have other philosophies interwoven in their texts. Since the focus of our current book is on the theme of “Yoga”, hence only those cantos or parts of the concerned Upanishads are quoted here. In case the reader is interested in reading the entire text of any Upanishad then he is requested to see this author’s volumes on the 108 Upanishads published separately.

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

No creature is perfect; it's foolhardy to claim so. The best of paintings cannot replace the original; the best of words cannot express the original emotions and sentiments. Even the Lord was not satisfied by one flower or one butterfly—he went on endlessly evolving and designing newer forms. So, I have done my best, I have poured out my being in these books. Honestly, I am totally incompetent—it was the Lord who had done the actual writing and had moved my fingers as if they were merely an instrument in his divine hands. But nonetheless, it's a tribute to the Lord's glory that he does not take the credit himself, but bestows it to them whom he loves as his very own. And to be 'his very own' is indeed an unmatched honour. However, I still beg forgiveness for all omissions, commissions and transgressions on my part that I may have inadvertently made. It's the Lord's glories that I sing, rejoice in, write on and think of to the best of my ability. I hope my readers will also absorb the divine fragrance effusing from the flowers representing the Lord's books, enjoy the ambrosia pouring out of them and marvel at the Lord's stupendous glories.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram whom even Lord Shiva had revered and worshipped. And surely of course to Lord Hanuman who was a manifestation of Shiva himself. Finding no words to express my profound gratitude to Ram, I just wish to remain quiet, and let my silence do the speaking and praying on my behalf.

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this masterpiece of classical Indian scriptural text.

"He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!" [A Hymn]

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Author

YOGA

It's Practice & Philosophy

According to the Upanishads

PREFACE

This Book on Yoga is based entirely on the concept of eclectic philosophy of YOGA as conceptualized in the “Upanishads” and explained by these scriptures.

This unique, rare and comprehensive Book in English explains in great detail the ancient technique of Yoga based entirely on the philosophy and teaching of the Upanishads. All aspects of Yoga have been elaborately dealt with in this book, and all its terms with their subtle meaning have been explained.

The uniqueness of this Book lies in the strength of the Upanishads that deal with Yoga from two perspectives—its philosophical angle and spiritual angle, and its health promoting exercises. All such Upanishads have been fully translated and explained in English, and included in the book in their entirety. Great stress is laid particularly in explaining all the different aspects and connotations of Yoga—describing it from its physical, spiritual as well as metaphysical angles.

As is well established, Yoga not only leads to a healthy physical life but takes its practitioner on the path that provides him or her with a comprehensive formula that helps in total evolvment in all matters that concerns his or her well-being, both in physical terms as well as in spiritual terms. It provides a healthy way of living in this physical world and at the same time shows the path to spiritual liberation and deliverance that provides the creature emancipation and salvation, granting him eternal peace, bliss and beatitude.

What are the “Upanishads”? Briefly, the Upanishads are those parts of the huge Vedic texts, the primary and the most ancient scripture of Indian civilization, that deal with the spiritual, metaphysical and philosophical aspect of the Vedas, rather than their ritualistic part.

The composite texts of the Vedas are classified into five parts, and each part has its own list of Upanishads. Some of these Upanishads are exclusively dedicated to the theme of YOGA—its different terms, its practice and its philosophy—both in terms of spiritualism and of metaphysics.

The Upanishads do not treat Yoga as merely a physical exercise to tone the body, though of course that is the most evident and practical benefit of Yoga. Yoga has deeper benefits that go much beyond the physical aspects. It cleans the inner self and tunes it to enable its practitioner to attain higher levels of spiritual evolvment and conscious living.

The present Book on Yoga is divided into 2 Chapters:

Chapter no. 1 will explain the numerous TERMS and CONCEPTS of YOGA in great detail as they are envisioned in the Upanishads.

Chapter no. 2 will bring together under one cover ALL THE UPANISHADS that deal with the subject of Yoga. Only the English renderings of the Upanishads (as they have been done by the author Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia) are used here for the simple reason that this book is primarily meant for English readers who would have no interest in or ability to read the original texts that are in classical Sanskrit.

The Chapter no. 2 has been divided into the following 5 Sections, each Section dealing with the concept of Yoga as expounded in the Upanishads of a particular Veda:

Section 1: Yoga Upanishads of the Rig Veda.

Section 2: Yoga Upanishads of the Sam Veda.

Section 3: Yoga Upanishads of the Shukla Yajur Veda.

Section 4: Yoga Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda.

Section 5: Yoga Upanishads of the Atharva Veda.

It ought to be noted by-the-way that author of this Book on Yoga has authored a detailed exposition in English on all the 108 Upanishads, and they have been published separately in 5 volumes, each volume having a number of parts according to the thickness of the volume.

I am grateful and thankful to my beloved Lord Sri Ram, the heart and soul of my life, and Lord Hanuman whom I regard as my guru, to enable me to present this wonderful “Book of Yoga” to the world on the occasion of “World Yoga Day” that is being celebrated on June 21, 2015. But I must be expressly clear on one important point—and it is that whatever I write are due not to any of my own scholarships or skills, but the Lord’s divine will that has simply used my fingers as its instrument to reveal to the world whatever the Lord wishes. Therefore, I deserve no credit or anything else for whatever that is written in these books which are but manifestations of the Will and the Word of God.

Nevertheless, being an ordinary human I cannot say, and must not say, that I have not committed any errors of omission or commission, mild or serious, which I guess are undoubtedly there in the books inspite of my above assertion that these books reflect the Will of Lord God that has made them possible, and that I am simply an instrument, a ‘pen’, in His divine hands.

Hence, I earnestly pray to my esteemed readers to forgive me and overlook such shortcomings in this book. But at the same time, I also request my esteemed readers to give me their feedback which would encourage me to move steadily forward in my

endeavour to serve my Lord till the last beat of my heart and the last puff of breath that leaves my body.

Date: 21st June, 2015—The “World Yoga Day”.

Prepared and presented by:

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia

Full address of Author—36-A, Rajghat Colony, Parikrama Marg,
P.O.—Ayodhya, Pin—224123
Distt.—Faizabad, U.P. India.
Mobile: +919451290400, +919935613060

Website: < www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com >

Email of Author: (i) < ajaichhawchharia@gmail.com >
(ii) < ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com >

Archive.org: https://archive.org/details/@ajai_kumar_chhawchharia

Facebook ID < www.facebook.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia8 >

Linkedin: www.linkedin.com/AjaiKumarChhawchharia

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YOGA

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CHAPTER 1

YOGA: Its Concepts and Terminology.

The word *Yoga* has a broad meaning. Briefly, the term means (i) to unite, (ii) to bring together, and (iii) to concentrate.

The word 'Yoga' is derived from two verbal roots—viz. 'Yuj' = Yu + Ja, meaning to yoke, or to concentrate. The dictionary meaning of the word is 'to join, a junction point, to attach, harness, to team with, to put together, to fix any union, to foster, to connect, suitability or compatibility of two or more things'. It also means 'to strive, endeavour, due diligence and industry; to concentrate, meditate, contemplate and focus the mind and thought on some abstraction; self restraint and channelising one's vital strength and energy in a particular direction'. The process of concentration, contemplation and meditation as envisioned by the Upanishads needed a well-disciplined mind and body. For this to happen, a set of exercises were devised—called the various 'Asanas and Bandhas' (sitting postures and controlling of the vital functions of the body). So, taken purely in its modern concept, it refers to the regime of different exercises, but on a broader plane its main objectives is to enable the aspirant to meditate and focus his energy on self purification, self elevation and self realisation. The fact that these exercises help eliminate—or at least alleviate—so many ailments that afflicts a body in today's stressful life is an additional bonus, but not the aim of Yoga, though of course a healthy body is definitely conducive in spiritual practice.

Therefore it is that school of philosophy that helps a Jiva, the living being or the individual soul, to attain concentration on the Supreme Being or the cosmic Soul known as Ishwara. As the denser or more concentrated matter has a greater gravitational pull compared to the lighter and lesser denser one, the concentration results in the supreme Soul pulling the individual soul by the mere force of its attractive force so as to bring about the former plunging headlong into the latter to become one with it. This phenomenon is likened to the individual obtaining the state of Kaivalya or oneness with the Supreme Being so that only the latter is left behind and the former vanishes from existence for all practical purposes.

In practice, 'Yoga' usually means doing meditation and contemplation that enables the man to focus his attention on important issues so that he can coordinate all his

faculties and efforts in his search for the truth and reality of anything. In the spiritual field, this is to find the truth about one's own self, about the world around, about how to free one's self from the fetters of ignorance, and about how to bring about a union between the different aspects of the universal Truth that appears to be scattered around due to the compound effects of generations of ignorance about the reality. It involves establishing a unity between the individual Atma, the 'self' of the person, and the cosmic Atma known as the Supreme Self by various well established processes that are documented in the scriptures. This effort makes a practitioner of Yoga enlightened about the truth of the pure consciousness residing in his bosom as the Atma, and this realisation, known as 'self-realisation', leads to attainment of eternal and profound internal ecstasy, bliss, felicity and beatitude. When this is achieved, the practitioner of Yoga is said to have found freedom from all delusions arising out of ignorance centered around the body and the world of material sense organs.

In Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas, in its Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 16 it is said that—"With 'Dharma' comes 'Vairagya', and with 'Yoga' comes 'Gyan'. Gyan paves the way for 'Moksha'. [That is, all these must act in coordination for the spiritual well-being of the Jiva.] (1)"

There is a very interesting deduction that we can arrive at by a close study of this Chaupai. As we have read above, the word 'Yoga' means to establish a union between two entities. The two pair of entities here are 'Dharma' and 'Vairagya' on the one hand, and 'Gyan' and 'Moksha' on the other hand. Yoga therefore helps the Jiva to establish coordination between all of them. That is, a practitioner of Yoga is able to reap the combined benefits of Dharma, Vairagya, Gyan and Moksha simultaneously. He gets acclaim and honour for his righteous deeds and noble thoughts, he enjoys the world without getting obsessed with it and affected by its countless miseries and horrors, he is regarded as a wise and enlightened person whose advice is sought by others, no amount of delusions and darkness of ignorance would now be able to put out the light of knowledge that has begun to shine from deep inside his inner-self, and no fetter will be strong enough to shackle him (i.e. his Atma) any longer.

Following the path of Dharma and Vairagya cleanses inner-self and scrubs off all the taints, impurities and blemishes that have formed a thick crust of negativity around his Atma, the true self of the Jiva. His path towards Moksha is lighted by Gyan, and this light shows the Jiva all the spiritual pitfalls in which he might have fallen had he walked on the same path leading to Moksha in the darkness of ignorance (called A-gyan). Even as success in any endeavour is dependent upon a coordination of many favourable factors playing in harmony with each other, success in this spiritual endeavour is aided and spurred on by Yoga. This indeed is the real and practical benefit of 'Yoga'.

The word in several senses has been used first used in Rig Veda, 5/81/1.

The *Philosophy of Yogdarshan* in its basic metaphysical form has the following main elements. It accepts three fundamental realities—Ishwara, Purush and Pradhana or Prakriti. Purush is the individual soul of the living creature. They are of the nature of consciousness and are infinite in number. The existence of Ishwar, the Parmatma or Param Purush, can be known only through the knowledge of the scriptures. He is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent. He is ever free from the shackles of Maya (delusions) and Prakriti (nature). He is the primary and fundamental essence of this existence, the initiator, the progenitor, the creator, the sustainer, the concluder and the

final resting place of it. He is designated or known by the ethereal word OM. It is by his will that the Prakriti (Nature) possessing the three basic Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) metamorphoses into the rest of the creation.

The Purush, the individual soul or creature, somehow forgets his real nature and heritage or lineage as pure consciousness, gets absorbed and mired in delusion which accompanies Prakriti as her companion, and thereby gets trapped in the cycle of transmigration consisting birth and death and their attendant miseries and problems.

However when he practices the various steps of Yoga, such as following diligently the eight-fold path shown by Yoga, called the 'Ashtaanga Yoga', he gets above the mundane and breaks thorough the veil of delusions and ignorance cast upon it and realises his true nature and essence. This result in self-realisation, and like the brilliant emerging from behind the bank of dark clouds, the person sees the brilliant Truth shining amidst the dark bleak and mortal world engulfed in a mist of delusions and ignorance. He becomes freed from the ignorance-fuelled delusory world of perishable material things and becomes established in the ultimate 'truth'. Since 'truth' is always one and not two, he is said to have attained the state of 'Kaivalya', the state of oneness that transcends the world of duality and delusions.

Therefore, besides its conventional meaning of contemplation and meditation, it also implies the various paths that bring about a union between the creature and the Supreme Being or Brahm. These paths lead to spiritual enhancement of the aspirant and help in his emancipation and salvation.

An ordinary man remains engrossed in his worldly activities, never finding time to contemplate on what lies beyond the mundane. He is so enchanted by the deluding mirage created by this fascinating world of kaleidoscopic colours that he has neither the time nor the inclination or the intention to look at the other side of it; he prefers to remain submerged in its transient and impermanent pleasures and comforts even at the cost of risking his long-term spiritual welfare. Numerous, endless and varied hopes, desires, aspirations and expectations pertaining to this world of material objects, and the pleasures and comforts derived from them, keep him entangled in their sticky net much like the spider remaining stuck in its own web.

In this connection there is a beautiful verse in the *Holy Quran* that says—"Allah hath sealed their hearing and their hearts, and on their eyes there is a covering. Theirs will be an awful doom" (Surah ii, verse no. 7), and "These are they who purchase error at the price of guidance, so their commerce doth not prosper, neither are they guided" (Surah ii, verse no. 16).

On the other hand, a self-awakened man realises the futility of worldly pursuit because he knows that this world is illusionary, deluding, temporary and perishable, as compared to the actual 'truth' that is eternal and steady. But it is not easy to reach this 'truth' when one is surrounded by falsehoods and delusions. So such a man distances himself from the world and searches for that 'truth' which would give him real peace and happiness that is everlasting instead of the one obtained by pursuing this world, because such a peace and happiness is transient and illusive. The path to this 'truth' is a rigorous one, and it passes through a dense forest requiring strict self discipline and resistance to worldly temptations, as well as abstinence from all things that have to do with darkness symbolising ignorance and delusions. In this connection there is a beautiful verse in the *Holy Quran* that says—"And believe in that which I reveal, confirming that which ye

posses already (of the scripture), and be not first to disbelieve therein, and part not with My revelation for a trifling price, and keep your duty to Me. Confound not the truth with the falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the truth” (Surah ii, verse no. 41-42).

Amongst the various options open to this spiritual aspirant is Yoga or meditation and contemplation. This Yoga is a very potent instrument that helps him effectively divert all his energy towards his chosen path of spiritual enlightenment as well as obtaining liberation and deliverance for his soul or Atma which is his pure and true ‘self’; it is an effective means in helping the aspirant in this endeavour. A person who practices Yoga is called a Yogi or an ascetic. Yoga is a spiritual science that establishes coordination between the pure conscious Atma (or soul) of the individual with the primary source from which this individual Atma had separated at the time of birth of the individual creature, thereby creating oneness between the two. Since a systematic and rational approach is needed to bring about an effective coordination and a final union between the individual’s Atma, which is the pure conscious ‘self’ and the truthful identity of the individual, and the cosmic Atma of the creation much like the merger of the water in a pot with the ocean which is the primary source of all water on earth, Yoga is called a ‘science’. As such, it has several well-designated and systematic steps towards the final goal of obtaining liberation by the pure conscious ‘spirit’ (soul or Atma) from the fetters that tie it down to this gross physical body, and emerge from it to become free like the cosmic wind or air element that pervades throughout the sky and which nothing can ever bind or enclose or capture in a sack. Yoga helps in this liberating and delivering exercise for the Atma or soul of the spiritual seeker.

Many terms have been in vogue since ancient times to describe the basic concept of Yoga, and this variation is probably due the fact that different exponents of this philosophy wished to assign it with some specific importance and gave a particular name to highlight this angle of Yoga. Thus we have different types of Yoga, such as Tarak Yoga, Nishang Yoga, Sankhya Yoga, Vahni Yoga, Adhyatma Yoga, Mantra Yoga, Dhyan Yoga, Gyan Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, Raaj Yoga, Laya Yoga, Hath Yoga, Samadhi Yoga, and Yoga in its general usage to mean meditation and contemplation.

Besides this, there are different schools of thoughts that call Yoga as having eight limbs or branches, or six limbs, or four limbs etc. We shall pick them one by one here and see briefly what are the various tools of Yoga, what are their meaning and spiritual significance, what are the obstacles or hindrances in Yoga and the remedy for them etc.

Upanishads dealing with Yoga :- The main texts that deal with Yoga exercises and its relevant topics such as the various Charkas (subtle energy centers in the body) and their activation, the Naadis (nerves and veins) and their detoxification, the different types of Aasans (sitting posture) and Bandhas (controls) et al, are the following—

- (i) Rig Veda—Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad
- (ii) Sam Veda—Yog Chudamani and Yog-rajo; Jabal Darshan Upanishad.
- (iii) Sukhla Yajur Veda—Advaya Tarak, Trishikhi Brahmin, Mandal Brahmin and Hanso-panishad Upanishads.
- (iv) Krishna Yajur Veda—Dhyan Bindu, Brahm Vidya; Yog Kundalini; Amrit Nada; Kshuriko; Shwetashwatar (Canto 2); Varaaha, Canto 5; Yog Shikha and Yog

Tattva Upanishads; Yog Kundali Upanishad; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 47-49; Akchu Upanishad, entire Canto 2.

Some parts of Tejobindu Upanishad describe the metaphysical importance and spiritual significance of terms used in Yoga texts in its Canto 1, verse nos. 15-19, 25-27, 31-42.

(v) Atharva Veda— Shandilyo-panishad; Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 8, paragraph no. 8-12; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 28, 48-51.

The immense importance and benefits of Yoga has been described in—(i) Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse nos. 25-26, 38-44, 47, 53-57, 66-69, 73-79, 140-165, and Canto 6, verse nos. 37-40. (ii) Akchu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its entire Canto 2. (iii) Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 18, 25-39, 74, 77-81; Canto 2, verse nos. 1-4, 21-24, 49; Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 5, verse nos. 47-49; Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 8, paragraph no. 8-12 of Atharva Veda.

The objective or aim of Yoga has been described in Yog Kundali Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 74, Canto 3, verse nos. 13-17. The culmination of Yoga is to help one realise one's true divine form and find rest in the spiritual glory of self-realisation, the discovery of the ultimate fount of bliss and joy residing in one's own bosom as the 'consciousness' known as the Atma

The pitfalls and dangers to guard against in Yoga, or the perils of not following instructions properly are enumerated in Yog Kundali Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse nos. 56-57. The obstacles in Yoga have been listed in its Canto 1, verse nos. 58-61.

The mentality, thoughts, behaviour, character and temperament of those who have become expert in following the esoteric tenets of Yoga, and have understood its real metaphysical intention and spiritual purpose have been enumerated in Akchu Upanishad, Canto 2 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

Yoga takes many forms, and the different Upanishads describe this single term Yoga in various ways, laying stress on one or the other aspect of it. We shall now attempt to examine some of the important aspects of Yoga in the context of different nomenclatures used to describe it by the various Upanishads.

(1) Tarak Yoga

The word 'Tarak' means to cause or enable to pass or cross over, to carry over, one that rescues, provides relief and succour, one that can provide liberation and deliverance to the creature from any bondage, while 'Yoga' is a word which generally refers to meditation but more technically it implies a union between two entities, and here it implies that form of meditation which can bring about the union between the individual creature's soul and the supreme transcendental Soul of the creation. In other words, the Tarak Yoga shows the path of meditation that culminates in self-realisation and to realise the ultimate truth about one's own self and the primary source of creation, i.e. the

supreme transcendental Brahm. Further, the word Tarak also means 'eye' and it has relevance here because meditation leads to the opening of the inner 'eye' of insight that leads to self realisation and enlightenment. There are various Upanishads dealing with this aspect of Yoga and deliverance, and the chief among them are Advai Tarak Upanishad and Tarak Upanishads belonging to the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

Tarak also means a meter of 4 x 13 syllables; hence it refers also to the various Mantras used for the purpose of meditation.

An ordinary man remains engrossed in his worldly activities, never finding time to contemplate on what lies beyond the mundane. He is so enchanted by the deluding mirage created by this fascinating world of kaleidoscopic colours that he has neither the time nor the inclination or the intention to look at the other side of it; he prefers to remain submerged in its transient and impermanent pleasures and comforts even at the cost of risking his long-term spiritual welfare. Numerous, endless and varied hopes, desires, aspirations and expectations pertaining to this world of material objects, and the pleasures and comforts derived from them, keep him entangled in their sticky net much like the spider remaining stuck in its own web.

On the other hand, a self-awakened man realises the futility of worldly pursuit because he knows that this world is illusionary, deluding, temporary and perishable, as compared to the actual 'truth' that is eternal and steady. But it is not easy to reach this 'truth' when one is surrounded by falsehoods and delusions. So such a man distances himself from the world and searches for that 'truth' which would give him real peace and happiness that is everlasting instead of the one obtained by pursuing this world, because such a peace and happiness is transient and illusive. The path to this 'truth' is a rigorous one, and it passes through a dense forest requiring strict self discipline and resistance to worldly temptations, as well as abstinence from all things that have to do with darkness symbolising ignorance and delusions. Amongst the various options open to this spiritual aspirant is *Yoga* or meditation and contemplation. This *Yoga* is a very potent instrument that helps him effectively divert all his energy towards his chosen path of spiritual enlightenment as well as obtaining liberation and deliverance for his soul or Atma which is his pure and true 'self'; it is an effective means in helping the aspirant in this endeavour. A person who practices *Yoga* is called a Yogi or an ascetic. *Yoga* is a spiritual science that establishes coordination between the pure conscious Atma (or soul) of the individual with the primary source from which this individual Atma had separated at the time of birth of the individual creature, thereby creating oneness between the two. Since a systematic and rational approach is needed to bring about an effective coordination and a final union between the individual's Atma, which is the pure conscious 'self' and the truthful identity of the individual, and the cosmic Atma of the creation much like the merger of the water in a pot with the ocean which is the primary source of all water on earth, *Yoga* is called a 'science'. As such, it has several well-designated and systematic steps towards the final goal of obtaining liberation by the pure conscious 'spirit' (soul or Atma) from the fetters that tie it down to this gross physical body, and emerge from it to become free like the cosmic wind or air element that pervades throughout the sky and which nothing can ever bind or enclose or capture in a sack. *Yoga* helps in this liberating and delivering exercise for the Atma or soul of the spiritual seeker.

The *Advai Tarak Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes this Tarak Yoga in great detail.

(2) Nishang Yoga

The word ‘Nishang’ means without any accompaniments; with no support and help; lonely and one of its kind. The word ‘Tattwa’ means the underlying principle of anything in existence; the essential and fundamental aspect of anything; the basics of any entity. ‘Yoga’ of course means to bring about a union or establishing a coordination between two entities; the practice of meditation and contemplation; the physical exercises involved in these practices as well as the mental abilities to contemplate, deliberate and research and arrive at the desired results.

The *Kshuriko Upanishad*, verse no. 21 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes this form of Yoga. The relevant verse is quoted here—“A person who has won control over his mind and intellect by strict diligence and discipline, who has been able to effectively control his senses and has learnt to focus his attention at the place he wishes it to be focused (instead of becoming a mute spectator and a humble serf of the natural wayward tendencies of the mind as well of the various sense organs, who has inculcated the habit of self-restraint and self-discipline, who has vanquished his natural instincts and willingness of the body and the mind to become prey to delusions and illusive charms of this world—such a person should move to a calm, quiet, serene and uninhabited place where there is no disturbance of any kind, physical or mental.

In such an environment conducive to spiritual upliftment, he should practice meditation and contemplation which enables him to establish a union or coordination between his own consciousness (Atma) and the cosmic Consciousness that pervades throughout the creation as the eternal and essential Truth. This is called ‘Nishang Tattwa Yoga’ because it involves the application of the principles of Yoga (both physical exercises of meditation and its mental aspect that helps to fix attention on some high and noble objective using the method of contemplation, deliberation and research) to arrive at the elementary principles of Nature that are irrefutable truths and do not need props to support them.

By constant and diligent practice of this type of Yoga, he should become totally neutral and full of equanimity, dissociating himself from both the body as well as the world. He should be dispassionate towards everything in this world. [In other words, it should not matter to him whether he dies or lives, whether his body suffers or enjoys the comforts of the world, and whether or not the world exists at all.] (21).”

(3) Sankhya Yoga

This philosophy is a combination of Sankhya philosophy and Yoga philosophy. In *Shwetashwatar Upanishad* 6/13 it is stated that the Supreme Being can be known by the means of ‘Sankhya Yoga’, i.e. by an intelligent fusion of ‘Sankhya’ and ‘Yoga’.

The second chapter of Bhagvata Gita is also called Sankhya Yoga. Now, let us analyse this word. It has two parts—viz. ‘Sankhya’ meaning learning and knowledge, and

‘Yoga’ meaning a union, a conjunction, a fusion. Elsewhere, e.g. 5/5, this word has been used to signify ‘Gyan’ and ‘Karma’ or a conjunction of knowledge and the philosophy of doing deed. The ‘Praanaagni-hotra Upanishad’, 1, uses this word to mean ‘intense thinking, deep contemplation or deep insight’. It is also, therefore, synonymous with ‘Gyan Yoga’ or the great concentration and diligent divergence of all energies of the creature to acquire truthful knowledge of the Truth and Reality behind what is apparent but not the whole truth, and what is not apparent at all.

These two paths are not separate, independent and distinct from one another. They are like the two legs by which one walks. The word Yoga also means to bring about a union between two entities, to create a synergy between the mundane and the spiritual. Here it refers to the union between the Atma and the Brahm, or the coordination of various elements of the creature’s body so that congenial atmosphere conducive to spiritual upliftment and enlightenment is created for the realisation of the true nature of the ‘self’, which would mean realisation of the presence of Brahm inside the very own self of the seeker. To bring this about, deep concentration of mind is needed along with the focusing of all the energies of the body in one single pursuit; this is meditation and contemplation.

The word *Sankhya Yoga* therefore means a combination of both the eclectic values of Sankhya philosophy and that of Yoga. Hence, that which brings about a fusion or union between the known and the unknown, that which establishes a coordination between the creature’s individual world and the cosmic world of the pure consciousness, that which brings the Atma, the pure ‘self’ of the creature close to the supreme ‘Self’ of the cosmos, that which links and ultimately brings about a merger of the single unit with its parent body, and that which helps in the creature’s final liberation from the vicious cycle of birth and death, is called Sankhya Yoga.

Now the question arise how is this brought about? The answer is in the following the manifold path of Yoga besides acquisition of knowledge as expounded and espoused in the Upanishads. Yoga has basically two connotations—viz. (1) meditation and contemplation which aim in harnessing all the energy and potentials at the disposal of the creature and diverting them and concentrating them on one single goal chosen by the practitioner of Yoga; and (b) following other methods of achieving this aim as laid down in the scriptures dealing with Yoga.

There are *four paths of Yoga*--(i) Gyan Yoga, (ii) Bhakti Yoga, (iii) Karma Yoga and (iv) Raaj Yoga. These have been described below in serial no. 4-7. These four types of Yogas are not mutually exclusive; they coalesce and overlap with each other, and their main aim is to help the spiritual seeker in his pursuit of ‘self-realisation’.

(4) Gyan Yoga—

Gyan Yoga involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be ‘real’ but is actually like a ‘shadow of the truth’. This Gyan Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Gyan Yoga are called ‘seers’ because they can ‘see’ beyond the visible,

multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Gyan Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature.

Gyan Yoga cannot be separated from the concept of *Gyan Shakti* is related to the stupendous powers and authority possessed by ‘knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity and enlightenment’, and the instrument that implements this authority and power is the intellect. Gyan is empowerment, because without knowledge the mind and body would work like those of animals. Therefore, Gyan Shakti is the powers, potentials, authority, strength, respect and empowerment obtained as a result of acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, sagacity, scholarship and expertise in any subject. This Shakti represents the dynamic powers and potentials that are a natural accompaniment of these grand qualities. This is called Gyan Shakti simply because merely wish and determination wouldn’t suffice if a person does not have the required knowledge and skill, the necessary expertise and level of wisdom required to accomplish his objectives successfully. In this context, Gyan Yoga would be to divert the diligence with which a man applies this knowledge, wisdom, erudition and skills to acquire the objects of this material world and get acclaim and applause for his expertise, knowledge and wisdom to achieving success in uplifting himself and realising the ultimate goal and truth of this life and existence, and freeing himself from the clutches of delusions which have tied him down through numerous lives to find final liberation and deliverance for his soul. Gyan Yoga endeavours to channelise one’s knowledge into auspicious avenues and inspire the creature to make efforts relying upon the knowledge and wisdom he possesses to bring about a union between the individual creature’s soul and the cosmic Soul and Consciousness known as Brahman so that ultimate emancipation and salvation is obtained and the cycle of delusions, birth and death and their endless horrors are got rid of. Therefore, Gyan Yoga entails diligent study and pursuance of the Truth, turning inwards and upwards instead of outwards and downwards, to separate the non-truth from the truth like separating the grain from the chaff, and finally coming to grasp with the eclectic concept of ‘truth and absolute reality’ of the ‘self and the Atma’, of ‘Brahman and Moksha (final and ultimate liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation)’.

The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse no. 12-26 describes the relationship between Yoga and Gyan. [See serial no. 16 below.]

(5) Bhakti Yoga—

Bhakti Yoga refers to having devotion for a chosen Godhead who is a person’s ideal, on whom he showers all his adoration, and on whom he focuses his attention. He is emotionally and sentimentally involved with his deity. Hence, the heart is the realm of Bhakti Yoga; it helps to commune with the divine.

The concept of Bhakti Yoga is similarly integral to the concept of *Ichha Shakti* relates to the power of the mind to have or make wishes, desires, aspirations and the determination to fulfill them. It is longing for anything, wanting to possess it any cost, and then endeavouring to acquire it. It is a precursor to Karma Shakti. It is only when one wishes to do anything and has the determination to do it that he actually goes about doing anything at all, strives hard to get success in it, and then would like to enjoy the fruits of his labour. It is closely related to Bhakti Yoga inasmuch as when the Ichha (desires) are

turned away from the world and hooked onto the search for the Truth and Reality with devotion and sincerity of purpose, it helps the man to turn away from the entrapping world of delusions and artificial comforts towards the world of truth and reality, i.e. towards his true 'self', the pure consciousness. The word 'Bhakti' means to be sincerely committed and devoted to anything, any cause, any principle, any doctrine or any entity. In this case, the devotion is towards the supreme transcendental Truth and the absolute Reality, whether known as Brahm or as the Atma. Bhakti Yoga therefore means a devoted and committed approach that coordinates the desires and actions in such a way that they are diverted to realisation of the supreme Truth known as Brahm instead of the mortal and perishable world of delusions and entrapments.

The importance of Bhakti has been elaborately described in the Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 8, paragraph nos. 9-12.

(6) Karma Yoga—

Karma Yoga expounds on the importance of doing deeds and taking actions, but with a different attitude. It stresses that we must not get 'involved or attached' to those deeds or action in as much as we shouldn't be bothered about the rewards or punishments incumbent on such deeds or actions. We must do them dispassionately and with detachment. The action or deed should be treated as one's offering to the God as well as an offering to the sacred fire sacrifice. This will ensure that the actions or deeds are not unrighteousness, corrupt or evil. On the contrary, whatever is done in which a person's subtle sub-conscious says is not the correct thing to do will be deemed to be unrighteous, unethical and unlawful, and therefore cannot be an offering to either the God or the sacred fire sacrifice.

Karma Yoga or the Yoga philosophy based on doing deeds and taking actions is intricately linked to the philosophy 'Kriya Shakti'. *Kriya Shakti* refers to the power of the gross physical body to act as per wishes of the mind and intellect. It is the Kriya Shakti which enables the supreme Authority to carry out its wishes through the organs of the body by taking various actions and doing different deeds. It is the ability of the body to actually do the deeds or take the actions and bring them to fruition. It also represents the ability to enjoy the results of doing such deeds and actions taken by the creature. The word also refers to being active and enterprising and the opposite of being lethargic and indolent. It is the actual ability to carryout his plans to their successful completion, i.e. to do deeds, to take actions and enter into enterprise, because simply sitting and procrastinating endlessly wouldn't give success unless there is assiduous activity and diligent effort, no matter how wise a man is and how determined he might be. The body is prompted into taking action by the desires and aspirations originating in the mind and intellect complex. If these desires are world-centric, then our actions and deeds would be also world-centric and so would be the result. This is because every activity gathers its quality from the texture of the desire that has prompted a particular action or deed. So, when the desire is to enjoy the outside world and its sense objects, the deeds and actions become entrapping and the cause of all world related miseries. On the other hand, if the desires are auspicious and noble, the same deed and action would become an instrument for spiritual upliftment as well as liberation and deliverance. In this context, the term

‘Karma Yoga’ would be to coordinate the effort of the body and the mind not towards fulfilling worldly aspirations that would be ensnaring and enslaving in the long run but to divert them towards the divine goal of spiritual liberation and deliverance. And the tool in this endeavour would be to have auspicious, noble and righteous desires, aspirations and wishes, collectively called the different Vasanas or Ichaas inherent in a man, instead of the worldly ones. Once the desires are purified and chastened, the activities and deeds to fulfill or accomplish those Vasanas or Ichaas are purified and chastened proportionately. At its height, the total renunciation of desires for enjoying anything related to the external world of sense organs and their respective objects is called ‘Vairagya’. This Kriya Shakti is more developed in those people who have a predominance of the Raja Guna or the second category of three basic qualities that decide the habits, temperaments and nature of any man. The Raja Guna makes a man more inclined towards enjoying the sense objects of the world and remain engrossed in the activities related to the gross world.

This form of Yoga has been elaborately described in *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 23-26. Refer also to *Yoga Tattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 19.

The *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 24 says that doing the various exercises of Yoga (meditation) are collectively called Karma Yoga because the word ‘Karma’ means action and deed.

(7) Raaj Yoga—

Raaj Yoga is the psycho-spiritual practice of exercise and breath control; it involves the various steps involved in meditation and contemplation, as is generally understood by the term Yoga. This Yoga lays emphasis on physical training of the body and the mind, and is the subject matter of numerous Upanishads dealing with such exercises (e.g. Yogchudamani of Sam Veda). It deals with such subjects as Pranayam, purification and activation of Naadis, kindling of Chakras (subtle energy centers in the body) etc.

Hath and Raaj Yogas are the two sides of the same coin. Neither is possible without the help of the other. The Raaj Yoga—which deals primarily with the control of the mind and self-control over the body and its organs which ultimately culminates in the state of Samadhi—is the primary form of the two, and Hath Yoga is merely an instrument to aid it. In other words, the main objective of Hath Yoga is to enable the practitioner to achieve success in Raaj Yoga. Whereas the Hath Yoga deals with the control of the body and its sense organs by strenuous exercises involving various Mudras, Aasans, Bandhs and Mantras, the Raaj Yoga is dedicated to control of the mind. Therefore, Hath Yoga is merely an instrument to aid the Raaj Yoga. Thus we see that the Yoga propounded by Patanjali is the one which is known as Raaj Yoga because it fulfills the objective and definition of this ultimate and noble form of Yoga by observing certain strict rules of conduct and self control.

The *Yoga Tattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 129 says that “When the ascetic is successfully able to do all the above exercises of Yoga, it is said that he has done ‘Raaj Yoga’; there is no doubt about it. When he is successful in doing Raj Yoga, he need not undertake other harsher forms of physical exercises of Yoga that are described as Hath Yoga”. This is because the Raaj Yoga exercises are less punishing and

demanding than those that are classified as Hath Yoga. The word ‘Hath’ means forceful, stiff, obstinate and adamant. The exercises in which the body is forced to undergo ruthless stress and subjected to stiff penalty by twisting and turning it against its will is therefore called Hath Yoga. Compared to those exercises, the ones described above are very mild and acceptable, and hence called Raaj Yoga, or the kingly form of Yoga done by those who cannot tolerate harsh exercises.

The *Yoga Tattva Upanishad*, verse no. 130 says that “A person practicing Raaj Yoga has easy access to Vairagya (a sense of detachment and renunciation for the deluding material world of sense objects, along with its sensual pleasures and material comforts) as well as Vivek (wisdom, common sense and erudition).”

Refer also to *Yoga Tattva Upanishad*, verse no. 19 which includes this Raaj Yoga as one of the four major types of Yoga. The others are Mantra Yoga, Laya Yoga and Hath Yoga.

The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 138 describes the importance of Raaj Yoga as follows—“Raaj Yoga helps in obtaining the various Siddhis (mystical powers (such as Anima etc. [Refer note to verse no. 44 above.]

These four Yogas (Mantra, Hath, Laya and Raaj) are possible when the Pran and Apaana Vayus (the two main vital winds) are merged with one another. That is, when a union between all the functions of the body is brought about and full control of the mind and body is established (138).

[Note—The *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 129 states that when an ascetic is successful in doing Raaj Yoga, he need not worry about doing Hath Yoga any longer. This is because Raaj Yoga entails total control of the mind and intellect. Once this objective is achieved, i.e. once the restlessness of the body and its wayward sense organs are brought under control, there is apparently no necessity for making special efforts to control them. These have been the cause of so much distress, restlessness and discomfort for the mind, and thorough it for the Atma of the creature. Once the mind is controlled, the body would automatically be controlled. The Raaj Yoga, which deals primarily with the control of the mind, ultimately leads to the state of Samadhi.]

(8) Vahni Yoga—

The Vahni Yoga ‘वह्नियोग’ deals with the activation of the vital wind/air with the fire/energy of life. For it, various techniques, processes, postures and exercises have been prescribed in Yoga, the chief among them being the activation of the Kundalini by Pranayam. The ‘fire’ required to heat and activates the ‘Apaana’ wind and push it upwards comes from the ‘Sun Chakra’ or the ‘Surya Chakra’ (subtle energy center) located in the region of the navel. It is done by ‘Surya Pranayam’. During this meditative practice, it is imagined that leaping flames are flaring up from the core of the sun symbolically residing in the navel of the Yogi, and these flames are virtually heating the Sushumna nerve (also called the pathway leading to Brahm) as well as the other vital winds present in the lungs, the heart, throat etc. By heating the lower end of the Sushumna nerve, which is akin to heating one end of a heating rod or coil, alongside the heating of the Kundalini and the Apaana wind, the opening of this Sushumna nerve, which was up till now blocked, is unclogged and the subtle energy of the coiled Kundalini, which was hereto before trapped inside it, is released and pushed up by the Apaana wind into the spinal cord through this Sushumna

nerve where it rises up through this channel right up to the mind or the top of the head, mixing with it all other winds en-route, collecting all their impurities with it, much like the hot air above the surface of the earth developing into whirlwind and rising up into the atmosphere, taking up along with it the dust particles, dry leaves, twigs etc. as it goes up. This polluted wind is finally exhaled through the right and left nostrils during the process of Rechak. The rising of the Kundalini is similar to the rising of heated mercury in a thermometer. When the bulb is heated, the mercury shoots up. Here, when the Kundalini is heated, the energy trapped inside it rises up the Sushumna nerve.

Vahni Yoga is so-called because it stokes the latent fire energy lying dormant hitherto in the body of the spiritual aspirant by activating the vital winds, especially the warm Apan wind present in the lower end of the intestines, and utilizing its powerful force to stoke and activate the Kundalini, thereby heating it and releasing its subtle energy through the opening of its mouth covering the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi (nerve). This released energy then snakes up this Naadi and reaches the head, first at the root of the nose and center of the eyebrows and ultimately the top of the head at the point of the Brahm Randhra, the hair like slit on the skull, from which is finally escapes at the time of death of the ascetic, giving him liberation from the fetter of this body for ever.

Refer *Yogchudamani Upanishad*, verse no. 38 and 107 of Sam Veda tradition, and *Dhyānbindu Upanishad*, verse no. 66-68 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. The *Rudra Hridaya Upanishad*, verse no. 20 ½ of the Krishna Yajur Veda says that Rudra, one of the angry forms of Shiva, is a personified form of the fire element also known as Vahni.

(9) Adhyatma Yoga—

The word *Adhyatma Yoga* consists of two parts—viz. ‘Adhyatma’ meaning something that pertains to the spirit, and ‘Yoga’ meaning a union or joint. Therefore, the means by which a man is able to establish a relationship between his present existence as a mortal being surrounded by worldly delusions and its attendant miseries as well as all the mundane worldly affairs that he is forced to attend to while he is alive, and his ethereal and divine existence as an eternal being in the form of the spirit or the pure consciousness Atma which is free from all these fetters and inherently blissful and peaceful as well as wise and enlightened, is called ‘Adhyatma Yoga’.

The importance of Adhyatma Yoga vis-à-vis the spiritual welfare of the creature has been described in *Kathavalli Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, Valli 2, verse no. 12. To quote—“[This verse describes how one can have a first hand experience of the supreme transcendental Being residing in one’s own bosom as the Atma.]

The supreme transcendental and divine Lord (i.e. Brahm) is most primary and primeval. He lives in the secret cave-like inner self or the sublime heart of a creature. That Lord is so esoteric, enigmatic and mysterious in nature and surrounded by a magical veil creating a deception about his true nature and form that he becomes most difficult to be seen or witnessed or perceived without special efforts even though he is present everywhere in this visible world (because he is all-pervading and omnipresent). He lives ensconced in the mind-intellect complex of the creature (thereby giving the latter its power to think, analyse, determine and show intelligent behaviour). He is beyond the

reach of worldly charms and the material objects of the sense organs. [That is, Brahm is not reachable by the gross organs of perception of the body and cannot be either understood by the low level of the mind though he is present universally everywhere in the world, even in the mind-intellect complex as well as the subtle heart of the creature.]

In other words, this divine entity is so profound and magnificent that it transcends all known definitions and criterions by worldly standards.

The only way to witness and have a first hand experience of this most exalted and holy Being is by the means of 'Adhyatma Yog' which entails a judicious combination of spiritualism and metaphysics with meditation and contemplation upon the eclectic and sublime Truth that is Absolute. [This is possible only when the seeker has an uncorrupt intellect not tarnished by worldly delusions and its illusionary veil of enticing charms and alluring attractions, and a mind open enough to be receptive to the truth which is beyond the purview of conventional logic and rational debates.]

When one successfully witnesses and experiences that supreme fount of spiritual bliss, he is not affected by worldly sorrows and joys. [This is because such a self and Brahm realised person understands that his 'true' self is the pure conscious Atma which is not only eternally blissful and happy but also a microcosm of the universal Soul known as the quintessential Truth called Brahm. He also understands that such emotions as sorrow and joy relate to the gross body and not to the Atma, and that this body is as perishable and impermanent as the things that are the cause of sorrow and joy in this world. Therefore he is unaffected by either of them.] (12)."

(10) Mantra Yoga—

Mantra Yoga refers to practicing Yoga through Mantra. It is that Yoga in which constant repetition of Mantras steadies the mind. The Mantra of the chosen deity is used as the standard common denominator and as medium to focus the mind and attention while practicing the eight-fold path of Yoga as prescribed by Patanjali, the greatest exponent of Yoga philosophy. This Yoga is called Astanga Yoga, the Yoga with eight branches or organs.

According to Vaayaviya Sanhita, which is an important work on Shaivism, there are five kinds of Yoga, and Mantra Yoga is the first amongst them. As stated above, it is that Yoga in which constant repetition of Mantras steadies the mind. When this is associated with Pranayam or breath control, it is called 'Sparsha Yoga'. This develops into a higher state called 'Bhaava Yoga' when the repetition of Mantra stops automatically and involuntarily, leaving only the feeling of tender devotion and spiritual ecstasy in its wake inspite on one living in this world. When one rises higher in this practice, the world completely disappears and there is no feeling whatsoever, a sort of 'neutrality' or 'zero' effect is obtained. This is called 'Abhaava Yoga'. At the last stage of spiritual evolution, the union with Shiva, the ultimate Truth and the embodiment of Yoga, is obtained. This state or stage is called 'Maha Yoga'.

The use of various Mantras as tools to aid in meditation is called Mantra Yoga. Usually, the quintessential and evergreen spiritual Mantra OM is used for this purpose—such as in Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 9-17; Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 24; Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 2-5; Yog Tattva Upanishad, verse no. 19, 21-22, 63,

136-139; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 132; Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 14; Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 71, 86, 101-104, but often some other Mantra is also employed such as for example the Mantra for Khechri or meditation on the sky element—such as in Yoga Kundali Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 16-23, the Melan Mantra which establishes a union between the individual soul and the cosmic Soul—such as in Yoga Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 1, the Hans Mantra such as in Hanso-panishad, verse no. 5-15; Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 59-63; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 21-22, 56-76, and Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 31-35, 82-83, 93.

Now let us examine some selected Upanishads dealing with the concept of Mantra Yoga.

(i) *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 132—

“Verse no. 132 = The Yoga done by this eclectic Mantra ‘So-a-ham’ is the one which is called ‘Mantra Yoga’. The divine effects of this Mantra is witnessed through the ‘Paschim Dwaar’, the left nostrils (from where the elixir of bliss and happiness, called Amrit, drips and tasted by the ascetic—refer verse no. 127). [In other words, when the ascetic does Pranayam using the left nostril to draw in air, the Mantra which he should use is So-a-ham. This Mantra means ‘That (Brahm) is me (the Atma; the pure consciousness; the soul).] (132).

(ii) The *Amrit Naad Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 24, 31-32 describes how OM is used in meditation. To quote—“Verse no. 24 = This form of Yoga takes some time to yield result like the palm tree that takes some time to bear fruits. It is to be practiced in a systematic manner, and without disruption. [That is, it should be practiced daily, at a fixed time and place, adhering to the number of cycles of Pranayam done daily, and not doing them on an ad-hoc basis or in a fluctuating or erratic manner.]

Similarly, it is prescribed that the time taken to mentally say the twelve ‘Matras’ or letters or elementary sounds of OM¹ should also be maintained and observed religiously. That is, the time taken to say the word OM should always be the same, no matter how many times it is repeated. It should not be done in an irregular, haphazard and erratic manner; it must be ensured that the time taken to say OM is the same each time (24).

[Note—¹The *twelve Matras* of OM are equivalent to four cycles of saying this word. This is because OM consists of the three basic sounds represented by the letters A, U and M. So, one cycle of three letters multiplied by four such cycles would yield twelve Matras of OM. Refer also to Kshuriko-panishad, verse no. 2-5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

“Verse no. 31-32 = While contemplating upon the five elementary elements of creation, such as the earth, water, fire, air or wind, and sky, one should meditate on one or more ‘Matras’ or basic sounds that constitute the texture of the cosmic fabric revealed in the form of the ethereal divine word OM representing the entire creation in its nascent and primary form. It is from OM symbolising these basic elements that the rest of the visible and invisible creation has evolved. The meditation should start from the grossest and heaviest of the five elements because it represents the physical ‘earth’ upon which we live, which needs no other proof of its existence besides its own visibility and the physical support it gives the entire visible creation, and which is the easiest element to

visualise and focus one's attention on. The meditation then progresses gradually to higher level, and the five elements are meditated upon depending upon their subtlety and sublimity, with the most sublime and subtle of them being meditated at the last because of the difficulty of its accessibility. [It is like the case of the student first learning about the world in class one through visual pictures, and slowly and in due course of time graduates to become a great scientist or philosopher who would show others the way instead of learning about it himself!]

So, while contemplating upon the 'earth' element, one should meditate on all the five sound forms or syllables¹ that constitute the word OM; while contemplating upon the 'water' element, one should meditate on the four sound forms or syllables² that constitute the word OM; while contemplating upon the 'fire or energy' element, one should meditate on the three sound forms or syllables³ that constitute the word OM; while contemplating upon the 'air or wind' element, one should meditate on the two sound forms or syllables⁴ that constitute the word OM (31); and while contemplating upon the 'sky or space' element, one should meditate on the one sound form or monosyllable⁵ that constitute the word OM.

Finally, while contemplating upon the ultimate Truth represented by Pranav which is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Brahm who is invisible, imperceptible, attributeless, almighty, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, immutable, immanent, all-encompassing and all-pervading element in creation, one should meditate on only the half syllable⁶ which has no distinctive sound, no special form, no definable characteristic or attribute, and no other existence except as pure cosmic Consciousness.

A wise, erudite and enlightened ascetic regards his body as the habitat of all the five elements of creation. He visualises that his body is the microcosmic cosmos, with the grossest and the heaviest of the five elements lying at the bottom (i.e. in his leg region) and the subtlest and the lightest at the top (i.e. in his head region), while the rest of the elements occupying the space in between depending upon their grossness or subtlety. Thus, he starts his meditation at the bottom, i.e. in his toes, focusing his attention at the tip of the toes and consciously feeling the presence of life and vitality in this part of the body. Then he gradually shifts his attention from down upwards till he reaches the top of the head in a progressive manner.

In other words, for the purposes of meditation, he visualises that the 'earth' element is present in his body from the tip of the toes to the knees, the 'water' element from the knees to the hip region, the 'fire' element from the hip to the heart region (i.e. in the area of the abdomen), the 'air' element in the region from the chest to the area of the nostrils, and the 'sky' element in the top of the head. Finally, when he has reached this stage, he would have automatically become self-realised and enlightened. Then he would no longer need a prop or support in his meditation, and would hear the cosmic sound of ether reverberating in his head. This sound called 'Naad' has no definition and characterizations, and therefore it is regarded as a 'half-syllable' or just an indication of the presence of consciousness that can be felt and experienced and witnessed, but not represented by any of the known letters or syllables. It is the fundamental and primordial sound that existed even before the first trace of creation had even been imagined or visualised.

This most evolved form of meditation and contemplation helps the ascetic to gain authority over all the elements in creation. [And since the body is a product of these five

elements, it naturally follows that he is able to exercise full control over his body.] (32). [31-32.]

[Note—¹The *five Matras of OM* are the following—A, O, U, M and the humming sound produced when the mouth is finally closed after the final letter M has been pronounced. This last sound resembles the reverberation heard when there is a distant explosion, indicating the ripples formed in the cosmic ether immediately after the first ‘Big Bang’ or cosmic explosion. From the metaphysical perspective, it was the first step taken by the supreme Brahm to initiate creation. These first ripples formed waves on the surface of this otherwise calm surface of the cosmic ether which overlapped each other as they moved forward from the central core of the cosmic explosion. The result was the generation of huge cosmic waves, the like of which are witnessed in the stormy ocean, and these waves produced ‘sound’ as they rolled on from their point of origin. This sound is conceptualised as OM. The cosmic debris and stupendous energy generated by the combined effect of the explosion and these waves resulted in the formation of the rest of the elements, and these elements formed the building blocks of the creation as we know it today.

²The *four Matras* make the entity a wee bit lighter and subtler than that with five Matras. This is a metaphoric way of saying that it symbolises the next lighter form of creation, or the form that is a bit less gross and a bit more subtle than the one with the full load of five Matras. If the five Matras are represented by the earth element, which is the heaviest of the five elements in creation, then the one slightly lighter and less dense than earth is ‘water’ element. Hence, while meditating upon the water element, the ascetic should focus his attention on the mental repetition of these four letters of OM, which are A, O, U and M, and consciously visualise the presence of consciousness in the region of the body from the knee to the hip region. That is why urine is formed in the lower part of the abdomen, and when one remains standing for long periods of time, the legs swell due to accumulation of bodily water in them.

³The *three Matras of OM* are the basic sounds of A, U and M. Applying the same logic as described in paragraph 2 above of this note, this is symbolic of an element which is lighter and subtler than water. Such an entity is the ‘fire’ element. It is present in the abdomen region, and that is why food eaten is digested here just like it is being cooked in an oven. So, while moving the focus of this attention from the hip region upwards towards throat, the ascetic should imagine the fire element as burning inside him and contemplate upon these three primary sounds that constitute OM. The three Matras of OM are indicative of three dynamic forces of creation called ‘Brahmi’ related to Brahma the creator, ‘Raudri’ related to Rudra the concluder of creation, and ‘Vaishnavi’ related to Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation—refer Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda, verse no. 86.

⁴The *two Matras of OM* are the two forms of sound produced by pronouncing the twin letters A and U together, and then U and M together. This is the second most subtle and lightest element in creation, and is known as the ‘air or wind’ element. It would be noted that when either of these twin letters are pronounced, a resonating sound is created, much like the rumbling of a plane taking off or landing in a distant respectively. The first two letters A and U = AU symbolise the taking off of the plane or the unfolding of the creation, and the second group of letters U and M = UM sound like the plane is landing, symbolising the conclusion or resting of the creation. These two Matras represent the ‘sky or space’ elements as it is in the space of the sky that all other elements had emerged in the beginning. This is because an open space is needed for anything to raise its head and stand up to make its presence felt; nothing can grow and develop in the confines of a closed space. Thus, while moving his focus of attention higher from the heart region to

the forehead region (or the area around the eyebrows), the ascetic should concentrate upon these two Matras of OM as representing the consciousness present in his body.

⁵The *single Matra of OM* is the monosyllable word itself. This happens when the meditation has reached its climax, and the ascetic has submerged himself in the cosmic Naad so much so that he literally drowns in its ethereal waves, and the cosmic reverberation of OM overwhelms his consciousness. Even as a man submerged in the water of the ocean loses his sense of distinction of anything pertaining to the external world, because he does not hear any of the genres of sound that have their existence above the surface of the ocean but hears only the sounds inherently present in the water of the ocean, an ascetic who has finally submerged himself in the overwhelming sound of the cosmic Naad (the cosmic ethereal sound that is present in the background of this visible creation) and has tasted its blissfulness in his mind, he does not care about any formalities, and the only thing that he hears is the resonance of the divine cosmic word OM reverberating in his head. This happens in the highest echelons of the body in the area of the head between the forehead and the top of the skull where the 'Brahm-Randhra' is situated.

Thus, the ascetic should contemplate upon OM in its entirety when he has reached this exalted state of existence when he can withdraw his attention from the rest of the body and focus it on the single area of it in the head. Obviously, in this state he would be unaware of the presence of the other parts of the body, and perceive consciousness only in the upper part of the head, i.e. in the region of the Brahm-Randhra. This is the highest form of Yoga, and it brings about a union of the 'self' with the 'cosmic Self'.

It would be pertinent to note here that verse no. 27 has stated that the realised ascetic's Pran or life forces leave his body through this aperture called the Brahm-Randhra. The reason is clear now—when the resonance of OM reaches a certain peak level, it creates such a crescendo of sound that the skull splits open due to the accumulated sound energy by overlapping sound waves.]”

(iii) The *Kshuriko-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 2-5 describes the use of OM in meditation as follows—“[These four verses describe the process of Pranayam* or breath control exercises that are integral to doing Yoga.]

It has been prescribed by the self-existent and self-begotten Brahma, the primary creator of the entire creation who is called 'Swayambhu' in the sense that he had no father or ancestor from whom he descended because he is said to be 'self-created', as well as extolled and ratified by the primary scriptures known as the Vedas, that the spiritual aspirant should do Yoga (meditation and contemplation) in a systematic way and according to the stipulated procedure. For this purpose, he should select a calm and serene place, free from all types of disturbances, whether mental or physical, and sit down in a proper sitting posture called Aasans¹.

He should put the wayward and wandering tendencies of the mind and heart, which are intrinsically restless and in a state of constant flux, under strict control and tight leash by withdrawing his mind and heart from all worldly attractions and the distractions that they inherently create much like a tortoise withdrawing its limbs into its shell when it decides to do so².

This inhalation process is called 'Purak', meaning one that fills up. The time taken to inhale this breath should be equivalent to the time taken to mentally pronounce twelve Matras (letters or syllables) of Pranav, or the sublime and ethereal word OM³. During this process of inhaling air from the outside into the body, the practitioner should

close all the so-called 'doors' or exit points in the body through which the wind could escape⁴.

The practitioner should sit ram-rod straight, with the spinal cord, the neck and the head in a straight line, and the chest fully expanded. While in this position, he should allow the inhaled wind to be retained in the body and spread through it. That is, the inhaled rejuvenating air is allowed to permeate throughout the body and get absorbed by the tissues. [This stage of Pranayam is called 'Khumbhak' or filling the pot. It is a metaphoric way of saying that the pot-like body is filled with fresh air after it is been emptied of stale air laden with all the gaseous impurities present in the body when it was exhaled earlier. This is done to oxidize every tissue and cell inside the body with fresh oxygen and energy, thereby stoking the inherent fire element present in these tissues and revitalizing them with new and fresh energy. It is like removing the covering ash from the pit of the sacrificial fire and blowing fresh air into the ambers lying underneath the ash to re-kindle the latent fire which had become dormant. This fire then jumps into life and burns with new vigour, thereby infusing new life into the body of the practitioner.]

Finally, when the body has sufficiently absorbed fresh oxygen present in the inhaled air and all the tissues and cells freshly revitalized by it, the different toxins and other impurities present in these tissues and cells are then expelled as noxious gases from them and collected by the residual air which has now become polluted and needs to be expelled from the body. This is done by exhaling it through the nostrils slowly in the reverse process. [This reverse process is called 'Rechak'.] (2-5).

[Note—* *Pranyam* is central to Yoga practices and all the Upanishads dealing with Yoga deal with it in one or the other context. Refer to Sam Veda's Yog Chudamani and Jabal Darshan, Shukla Yajur Veda's Trishikihi Brahmin, and Krishna Yajur Veda's Amrit Naad, Yog Tattva, Dhayan Bindu and Tejo Bindu Upanishads.

¹The proper sitting postures or *Aasans* for doing Yoga (meditation and contemplation) and practicing Pranayam (breath control) have been described in Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 19. The complete process of Pranayam is dealt with in this Upanishad in substantial detail.

²In other words, he should prevent his thoughts and emotions from spreading out into the world of material sense objects like the tentacles of an octopus, and then get entangled in them and remain entangled. Then he should inhale the outside air representing the cosmic life-giving wind element metaphorically called the Atma because it infuses a fresh lease of life into the otherwise inane and inert gross body of the aspirant. [In other words, inhaling air is like blowing fresh air into the furnace of life burning inside the body of the aspirant and kindling the 'fire of life' which has become weak without proper ventilation. Inhaling air or the wind element is like giving the Atma, which is pure consciousness and the true identity of the aspirant, a fresh lease of life by stoking the latent 'fire element' which keeps it energised.

The 'inhalation of fresh air' is a metaphoric way of saying that the spiritual aspirant imbibes eclectic virtues and qualities that are exemplarily auspicious and noble by remaining ever vigilant and conscious towards what is right and what is not. This acceptance of good and noble from the outside world is equivalent to 'breathing in fresh air or the Purak' phase of Pranayam. Now, when good ideas and virtues enter the inner self of the aspirant and are retained by him instead of just letting them pass off as a transient change then they are bound to have a permanent positive effect on his overall personality, mentality and temperament. This is equivalent to the 'holding of breath or the Kumbhak' phase of Pranayam. It is obvious that when good and positive virtues are in the ascendant the bad and negative ones would be on the decline; when fresh air enters

a closed room the stale air is pushed out. This is equivalent to 'exhaling of breath or the Rechak' phase of Pranayam.]

³The word OM has three basic letters, viz. A, U and M. Therefore, pronouncing the *twelve Matras of OM* would here mean that the word is said four times—3 Matras x 4 times = 12 Matras. Refer also Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse nos. 24 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

⁴The symbolic *doors* of the body are the following—two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, one urethra and one Brahm Randhra (the hair-like slit on the top of the head).]

(iv) *Yoga Tattva* Upanishad, verse no. 21-22—" The signs of these four stages or phases of Yoga (as described in verse no. 19) are being mentioned briefly now. An aspirant who practices Japa (repetition) of a Mantra¹, complete with all its components such as Matrikaa² etc., for a continuous period of twelve years is able to acquire knowledge of the various mystical powers and divine potentials known as Siddhis such as Anima³ etc.

But this type of Yoga is done by people of low category whose intellectual development and spiritual aspirations is not of the higher level that is to be expected from true spiritual aspirants. Therefore, they are treated as the lowliest class of spiritual aspirants⁴ (21-22).

[Note—¹*Mantra* is a group of mystical letters or syllables or words or phrases that are used as an aid to concentrate and steady the mind and focus one's energy towards the successful completion of the process of Yoga. It is the sound symbol embodying the form, the power and the consciousness of the supreme Brahm or its various manifestations as the deities worshipped.

²*Mantrika* is the part of the Mantra dedicated to Mother Goddess symbolising the esoteric and powerful forces of Nature. It is useful in igniting and activating the latent subtle energy trapped inside the Kundalini, the coiled energy center at the base of the spine.

³The *Siddhis* are eight in number and are the mystical powers that come as a natural boon to the ascetic as part of his spiritual elevation. They give him super human powers and help him to accomplish astounding feats. Briefly these eight Siddhis are the following— (i) 'Anima' means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) 'Mahima' is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one's achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) 'Garima' is to have weight, stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) 'Laghima' is to have simplicity and humility; (v) 'Praapti' is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) 'Prakramya' is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) 'Ishwatwa' is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) 'Vashitwa' is to be able to control and subdue others.

⁴This is because Mantras and Yoga should not be used to acquire powers that give worldly fame and wealth which usually come naturally to those people who have certain super-natural occult powers. People flock to them from far and near seeking their blessings for their worldly problems and then donate huge largesse to them if their wishes are fulfilled. This should not be the aim of either the use of Mantra or of Yoga. Their main target should be self-purification, self-enlightenment and the realisation of the truth about the world, about one's own self and the consciousness residing in one's bosom. It should be aimed at providing a gateway to spiritual liberation and deliverance rather than assembling a crowd of followers and blessing seekers, for in the latter case the ascetic would be tied down to this world instead of finding freedom from it. The delusions that

accompany all worldly praises and honours, the hallucination that all worldly charms, pomp and pelf cause are very overpowering. That is why if a spiritual aspirant employs Mantra and Yoga to successfully acquire the Siddhis and thinks that he had done a great job by harnessing the potentials of Yoga and Mantra by the dint of his hard practice and sacrifice, then he is a man of a low intellect and wisdom.]”

(v) The *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 59-63 describes the ‘Hans Mantra’. To quote—

“Verse no. 59-61 = The Pran (here referring to the breath passing through the nostrils when one breathes) moves sometimes through the path which goes to the left (of the central Sushumna Naadi, i.e. through the Ida Naadi passing up to the left nostril), and sometimes through the one that goes to the right (of the central Sushumna Naadi, i.e. through the Pingla Naadi passing up to the right nostril). The Pran wind is so subtle and sublime that it cannot be visibly seen.

Just like a ball thrown by the player moves restlessly in various directions, bouncing here and there and changing its course every now and then unpredictably, the creature is also buffeted and kicked around (like the ball)¹ by the two prominent winds called the Pran and Apan and moves restlessly in so many places (and in so many wombs or takes so many births).

The tug and pull of these two winds on the creature is much like a bird being pulled down by the string tied to its legs while it tries to fly off in the sky². An ascetic who is well acquainted with this fact is regarded as really wise and enlightened.

While the Pran leaves the body it makes a sound equivalent to the Sanskrit alphabet ‘Ha’ (equivalent to the sound made while pronouncing *her*; this is the sound made in the throat whilst one exhales breath with mouth open). On the other hand when it is taken in, it makes the sound of the Sanskrit alphabet ‘Sa’ (equivalent to the sound made while pronouncing *sir*; this is heard when one inhales air through the clenched teeth but open mouth) (59-61).

[Note—¹The same idea has been described in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 27-28 of Sam Veda tradition. It says—“Just like a ball or balloon being thrown or kicked around by players, a creature (an individual) cannot remain stable and steady for long because it is under the spell of Pran, Apan and other vital winds¹ which constantly keep it restless, agitated, always mobile and fidgety and in a state of constant flux (27).

The creature, under the buffeting influence or thrust of the vital winds or airs, is compelled to move upwards or downwards, to the left and to the right (like an air-filled balloon) so swiftly that it loses its bearings and does not know what is happening to it² (28) [27-28]”.

These winds slap and dash against the sail of a ship on a high sea, as it were, tossing and turning it with the lashing of every gust. The creature cannot sit quietly and calmly in the ship because these vital wind forces continue to flap and flutter the sail, whipping the ship recklessly in the churning waters of the sea represented by this world.

The creature’s body is like the balloon or a football, as it is filled with air called the vital winds. Even as a balloon or a football moves with the slightest touch, is tossed about violently in a squall or gale and it cannot remain at a single point for long, the creature also has an inbuilt and inherent tendency to be always on the move and be fidgety. The biggest proof of this fact is witnessed when a dead body is observed. All the rest of the organs of a corpse are present intact in it, the only imperceptible element which has left the body is ‘Pran’ or the vital wind. The corpse becomes heavy than a living man and it

lies motionless if it is not moved by others; it has no capacity to move on its own and it becomes heavy like lead.

The creature is flung around so rapidly in quick succession in waves of emotions and sentiments originating in its heart and mind due to the various influences of the external world that it is not able to discern and make out what is transpiring. It becomes completely disoriented in the topsy-turvy path of transmigration. It does not get a chance to bring itself together and realise who it is, what it truly is, where does it belong, what is the correct direction it should take and which direction it is actually heading to, where should it go and where it should not. Taking the example of a boat in a stormy high sea, the harried creature is so rapidly hurled and tossed about like a ball and thrown over board that it is more concerned with grabbing any float at hand just to avoid getting drowned than to focus on long term goals of life. Its immediate concern is the survival in the next moment, as it were, and not the moment beyond the first. Another good example would be a balloon or a dry leaf or a kite caught in a storm. There is no need to elaborate what happens to them. The allegory will aptly summarise the comic but alarming situation for the reader.

²The analogy of the *bird* is used here to emphasise the point that the creature has a natural tendency to remain free like the bird, but it allows itself to be tied voluntarily in shackles of delusions pertaining to this world out of its own ignorance, and unending greed and desires, and gets trapped as a result much like the bird which falls for the trap laid for it by the cunning bird-catcher. The tug of war between the world and its magnificent charms and fascinating colours, no matter how transient and horrifying in the long run, are nevertheless very enthralling for the time being, and the creature has no inclination to look ahead and see the horrendous consequences for falling for them. This is the 'downward pull of the Apaana wind', used here in a metaphoric way because it is this wind that moves down the body through the intestines and helps to push the eaten food down the alimentary canal and out through the anus. On the other hand, the Pran moves in the upwards directions as is obvious when we observe the breath which moves out of the lungs and goes up to the nostril to be exhaled. This 'upwards movement of the Pran' is a metaphoric way of saying that the creature is seeking spiritual upliftment.]

"Verse no. 62-63 = Since these two alphabets 'Ha' and 'Sa' form the word 'Hansa'¹, meaning a divine Swan (representing the immaculate and divine Brahm, and implying the constant assertion of the creature that he is as immaculate and pure as the Swan representing this Brahm), it is deemed that all the living beings (here referring to the human beings and other creatures who breathe air specially) are constantly doing Japa (repetition) of the divine Mantra pertaining to the supreme Brahm. This Japa is done involuntarily and automatically approximately twenty one thousand six hundred times because this is the number of times one breathes during the course of a day consisting one day and night.

This is equivalent to doing Japa using the famous and most acclaimed Gayatri Mantra as far as the Yogi who is a well established, wise, erudite and enlightened ascetic or any other practitioner of meditation and contemplation is concerned. This automatic Japa of the Mantra 'Hans-Hans' repeatedly and incessantly by the ascetic provides him the same benefit of emancipation and salvation that is obtained by repeating the Mantra of Gayatri (62-63).

[Note—¹The bird Swan or *Hansa* is considered the most pure, clean, wise, erudite and clever among the birds. It is believed that it eat pearls and picks them up from amongst an assortment of gems, which symbolically means it picks up and accepts only the best amid

the variety of things available to it in the form of an assortment of various qualities and virtues that define the character of all individual creatures in this world. It is also reputed to drink the purest form of milk, leaving aside the water content of an adulterated form of this nourishing liquid. It is also the vehicle of Goddess Saraswati, the patron Goddess of knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, speech and learning. Hence, the reference to a swan while describing a creature conscious of the vital wind or Pran passing through him means the basic, inherent and intrinsic tendency of that wisened and intelligent creature is to be the best, most pure and divine, wise, awakened and enlightened, adroit, clever and sagacious like the swan, and pick all the goodness and forsake all that is bad in this world. Saraswati rides on a swan, symbolising the creature's inborn enlightenment and excellence of his mental caliber. Symbolically, Saraswati resides in his Pran because it rides on the swan, i.e. in his heart, throat and mind—that is, his heart has purity of emotions, he speaks well of all, and his words are sought after by all as priceless gems of wisdom, and his mind is intelligent, discerning and noble.

The alphabet 'Ha' of the word 'Hansa' is sounded by the vibration of the exhaled wind passing through the vocal cords present in the throat or the wind pipe which connects to the nose, while the alphabet 'Sa' is sounded by the root of the tongue which opens into the mouth when the breath is inhaled. Both the nose and the mouth open in the same cavity called the throat. Hence, the inter relationship between 'Ha' and 'Sa' is evident. During the twenty-four hour period covering a single day and night, a person inhales and exhales, or breathes, roughly twenty-one thousand times because each cycle of inhalation and exhalation is equivalent to saying one Mantra 'Hansa' consisting of the two syllables 'Ha and Sa'.

Verse no. 24 of this Upanishad says that the supreme transcendental Brahm, known also as Pranav, resides in the heart of all the living beings in the form of a Hansa. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the divine swan, but he was unaware of his divinity and sublimity, his exalted stature, till that was pointed out to him in this verse. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must do not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan.

The *Yogchudamani Upanishad*, verse no. 82-83 of Sam Veda tradition describes this Swan in the context of Yoga. Let us see what it has to say in this context—"The 'Hansa' (literally a divine swan) resides gloriously and majestically in the center of the two eyes of a creature during the waking state of consciousness. The letter 'Sa' (सकारः) of the Hindi/Sanskrit alphabet represents the 'Khechari Mudra' of the Yogi which is certainly the personification or the image of the word 'Twam' (82).

The letter 'Ha' (हकारः) represents the supreme Lord of creation, called 'Parmeshwar' which is certainly symbolised or represented by the word 'Tat'. [That is, the two syllables of the word 'Hans', meaning the divine swan, are 'Han' (हं) and 'Sa' (स) which stand for the two words of metaphysics which have profound impact—the 2nd word is 'Twam' and the 1st is 'Tat' corresponding to these two syllables respectively.] Any person who concentrates his mind and attention, and contemplates and meditates upon the letter 'Sa' shall surely become akin to, or equivalent to the form or the image represented by the letter 'Ha'. This is called contemplating upon and practicing of the twin tenets of 'So-a-ham' and 'Tattwa-masi' (83) [82-83].

The Upanishadic sage establishes uniformity and oneness with the two great philosophies and metaphysical concepts of the scriptures—"So-a-ham" which means 'that is me', and 'Tattwa-masi' which means 'the essence is pure consciousness and it is me'. The word 'that' refers to Brahma which is the universal and absolute Truth and Reality

about the existence, and has the qualities, inter alia, of enlightenment, of being eternal, omnipotent, universal, omnipresent, immanent, omniscient etc. When the seeker/aspirant focuses his attention on the self represented by the letter 'Sa' (self) and the 'Khechhari Mudra' (when he is unconscious of the external world and focuses his attention on the glorious supreme entity present in the center of his eyebrows), he realises the truth of the maxim 'So-a-ham'. When he opens his eyes of wisdom, the truth of the 2nd tenet 'Tattwa-masi' dawns on him. Put simply, it means that the creature realises that 'he is the same as the supreme Brahma who resides in his Atma/soul present in his bosom/heart'. At the same time, 'the external world seen through this eye of wisdom symbolised by the presence of the divine swan in his eyes is the same Brahma who has revealed himself in this multifarious, diverse and myriad world'. This is the essential truth, or 'Tattwa'.]

(vi) The *Brahm Vidya Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 56-75 describe the use of Mantra Hans and OM during Yoga. We shall quote only one verse no. 56 here which says that the two Mantras that ought to be used for meditation are OM and Hans. To quote—"To begin with, the aspirant should reverentially pronounce the two Mantras (OM + Hans, or OM + So-a-Ham) and perform the preliminary worship in the prescribed manner. He should reverentially bow and adopt the different Mudras (postures) of Yoga (meditation) to worship and honour the Divinity (represented by these two Mantras) (56).

[Note—Verse nos. 2-8 of this Upanishad assert that OM is the Mantra for the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, while verse nos. 16, 20-26, 34, 60-65, 78-79 stress that the Mantra is Hans because it refers to the consciousness residing as the Atma inside the living being.]”

(11) Dhyan Yoga—

The word 'Dhyan' (pronounced as 'Dhyaan') in the context of Yoga means to do meditation and contemplation by concentrating the faculties of the mind and intellect. Usually it refers to the visualization of the presence of the supreme transcendental Divinity called Brahm in the point of the forehead between the two eyebrows. Refer *Varaaha Upanishad*, canto 5, verse no. 12—12 ½ of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, and *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad*, Brahmin 1, section 1, verse nos. 3-10 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

The *Kshuriko-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 18-19 describes 'Dhyan Yoga' as follows—"18-19. 'Dhyan Yoga', literally meaning meditative exercises done by intense concentration of the mind and use its energy as if it were a sharp-edged knife (much like the use of laser beams to perform complicated surgery in modern medicine), can be employed by the practitioner of Yoga (i.e. by the seeker of true liberation and deliverance) to rupture or pierce through or bore into all the Naadis and let the Pran enter them. But the Sushumna Naadi is the only one which cannot be broken through or its sanctity violated¹.

A wise and sagacious person is one who pierces all the Naadis in this life itself. This is to ensure that his Pran or vital winds and life forces present in his body, which had been till now wandering aimlessly in the subtle space inside the gross body, is able to enter into these ducts and move up the correct path that can lead to its proper destination. Since the wind trapped inside the body has originated from the all-pervading free wind or

air element present in the cosmic space, its 'natural destination' is this cosmic space, and its 'liberation' is its escape from the enclosure of the gross body and mingling with the parent body of the cosmic wind outside. This is its final 'deliverance' from all artificial entrapments created by the gross body because once outside, the air element would merge indistinguishably with the cosmic wind element and lose its independent identity. A realised ascetic allows this to happen when he uses the will power and determination of his mind to forcefully make his Pran to bore into the various Naadis, and move inside them. Once inside, the energised and heated Pran unclogs all the veins and nerves by its mere power of force and de-toxifying abilities, and moves freely inside them. It gradually moves up the body much like hot air, allowed to enter a network of tubes, has a propensity to move freely inside them and head upwards because of the fact that any hot air moves up and not down. Pran, being lighter or 'subtler' than all the other elements in the body because it now resembles hot and energised air or vital wind element, has overcome all resistance and is able to enter that path that leads to arousal of the hitherto dormant spiritual energy lying trapped in the heart as the pure consciousness of the creature. Determined and steadfast practice of meditation, along with contemplation on the main objective of doing Yoga and concentrating upon the Truth, keeps the ascetic firmly on his path.

In its final leg, the Pran is able to sufficiently gather enough energy and force and momentum to unfurl the energy in the coiled Kundalini² at the bottom of the spine. When the Pran sneaks into it, it finds entry into the Sushumna Naadi which has its lower end blocked by this Kundalini. Heated vital winds then snake up this tube, much like mercury moving up the thermometer, and finally reach the top of the head at the spot called the Brahm-Randhra. When the pressure builds up, the final explosion occurs, and this Brahm-Randhra splits open, allowing the Pran to escape into the outer space for ever. This stage is called 'Kaivalya Mukti', or the 'one of its kind' of liberation and deliverance for the aspirant seeking freedom, because once the Pran merges with the cosmic wind or air element, there is no question of its re-entering the body. This is because the body of such an ascetic is allowed to disintegrate into its basic elements, such as the earth, water and fire. The subtle space inside the body would then automatically coalesce with the open space outside. No trace of the earlier creature remains. This is obviously the final closure of the scene for him.

Thus, the wise and sagacious practitioner of Yoga should use the inviolable authority and majestic influence of his Atma, i.e. the astounding supernatural power of the pure conscious 'self', to firmly direct and strictly order the mind and the intellect to use their stupendous abilities and skills along with the energised and heated vital winds called Pran present inside the body to jointly rupture and bore through the different Naadis and penetrate them. That is, the wise ascetic uses the stupendous and powerful authority inherently bestowed in his own 'self', called his pure conscious Atma, to diligently and purposefully divert all the efforts of the two powerful instruments that he has at his disposal, i.e. the Mana (mind) and the Pran (vital winds and other life forces inside the body), to actively practice strict Yoga (as described in this Upanishad).

This Yoga practice then becomes as powerful and effective as a heated sharp-edged knife or 'Kshuri' that enables the ascetic to symbolically cut through the Naadis in a surgical and precise fashion. The revitalizing Pran then enters them and completely fills

them. Then the Naadis become as vibrant and invigorated as the healthy Jasmine flower which gives out a sweet fragrance typical of it (18-19).

[Note--¹In other words, since this Sushumna Naadi symbolically represents the eternal and irrefutable Truth in creation, and remains soaked in its exuberant glory, it is impossible to subdue it and cause any disturbance in its serenity. This is a metaphoric way of saying that once the ascetic reaches that stage of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation when he has realised the actual Truth and the eternal fount of beatitude and felicity attendant with it, no force in creation can ever sway him from his exalted stature. He is deemed to have reached the pinnacle of spiritual achievement where he becomes invincible for the myriad temptations and delusions surging in the world which drown all other creatures in their swirling whirlpool.

The word *pierce* when used in the spiritual context is to overcome the resistance of the physical body and its various components, including the Naadis, to any effort that causes inconvenience or discomfort to it. Yoga is a rigorous self-disciplining spiritual exercise that does not compromise on principles. Since the body is accustomed to remaining engrossed in comforts and enjoying pleasures emanating from the material world, it is natural for it to resist any change in the status and be subjected to control and discipline. The Naadis are singled out for such ‘piercing or rupturing’ or vanquishing or overcoming or subduing because it is through the network of Naadis that the body keeps itself alive as consciousness flows through them. The Naadis carry sense impulses from one part of the body to the other; it is through them that the blood flows; it is through the Naadis that the mind is able to receive the sensory inputs from the sense organs located on the surface of the body and then help the body to respond; it is the Naadis which are like the central network of wires and circuits of an electronic equipment. If the Naadis are blocked or made to stop working, the body would be as good as dead. Hence, the best way to control the entire edifice of the body is to control its command and control network in the form of the Naadis.

²*Kundalini*—The Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-16 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition is dedicated entirely on this concept of Kundalini. Other major Upanishads that deal with the topic of Yoga also deal with the concept of Kundalini because both are intertwined concepts.]”

The *Tejobindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse no. 36 explains the metaphysical importance of Dhyan. To quote—“‘Dhyan’ is to be steady in the thought of ‘I am Brahm personified’, to be constantly engrossed in meditating and focusing the mind upon the ‘truthful self’ as a personified Brahm to the extent that no other props or supports are needed to reinforce this conviction. This realisation, this firm conviction, this enlightened view about Brahm and the ‘self’ provides immense happiness and bliss (36).

[Note—*Dhyan* is defined as contemplation and deep concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect. It is also regarded as one of the six limbs of Yoga. Obviously, no great achievement is possible without a focused and concentrated mind. So if the spiritual aspirant is firm in his conviction that his Atma is Brahm personified, it would aid him in his spiritual upliftment as compared to the situation when he is full of doubts about the authenticity of this statement and keeps on jumping ships in the hope of reaching his spiritual destination, in which case he would be left neither here nor there.]”

(12) Laya Yoga—

Technically, the ‘Laya Yoga’ has two meanings. One with a purely metaphysical dimension is the dissolution of the Chitta or mind and its various faculties. When this happens, from the spiritual perspective, the practitioner of Laya Yoga virtually dissolves his independent identity and merges his existential form with the object of his constant remembrance or contemplation, and it is the supreme Lord. Such a spiritually elevated and attained aspirant remembers his Lord even while going about his daily life and its chores simply because his mind is completely dissolved in the remembrance of the Supreme Being and it is the physical gross body that does the various deeds associated with the world, resulting in the person remaining absolutely oblivious of what he has done or whatever is happening around him. This has been asserted in *Yoga Tattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 23.

According to another interpretation based on Patanjali’s Yogsutra, it is called ‘Kundalini Yoga’. This is the physical aspect of Yoga by which various techniques are employed to kindle the latent energy lying dormant in the coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine, called the Kundalini, and spiritual evolvment is attained. This method has been described in detail all major Upanishads detailing the eight steps of physical Yoga. Refer *Yoga Tattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 19.

Now let us see what the *Yoga Tattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 23 has to say about Laya Yoga. “The dissolution of Chitta or mind is called Laya Yoga. [See note to verse no. 19.]. It has been said to be of millions of types. For example, it includes the remembrance of the attributeless and formless Supreme Being, the lord God called Ishwar, while one goes about his daily chores in this world, such as while walking, sitting, waiting, sleeping, eating etc. [In other words, while the Brahm-realised person does the chores of his daily life, his mind should remain focused on the supreme Brahm instead of focusing on the chore. The resultant affect would be that he would be doing them in a mechanical manner, not getting either emotionally involved in them, hoping to reap any rewards or fear any punishments from these deeds, nor even remembering what he is doing or is supposed to do. He is in a complete oblivious state of existence vis-à-vis the world, while perpetually remaining engrossed in the ecstasy derived from self-realisation and Brahm-realisation. As is obvious, such a man would be a total misfit for the society; his acts and deeds and behaviour would be un-conventional and irrational for the world. The resultant benefit would be that the world would stop bothering him, thinking that he is a lost case. This would free him from so much mundane botherations and the necessity of observing social niceties. His mind or Chitta would not be troubled by the problems of the body or the world.] (23).”

The *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 135 is very explicit in this when it says— “Verse no. 135 = Persistent and consistent practice of Hath Yoga results in Laya Yoga¹, i.e. it helps in the merger of the individual soul of the creature, called the Jiva, with the supreme Soul of creation known as Brahm; it helps to bring about oneness between them. The Chitta (the sub-conscious mind and its power to think, remember and act as a referral bank of the intellect) dissolves in the Atma, and the vital winds in the body lose their inherent restlessness and become calm and quietened² (135).

[Note--¹The word 'Laya' means merger and getting dissolved. Hence, *Laya Yoga* refers to the merger of the individual soul with the supreme Soul of creation as described in verse no. 134 above. Refer also to *Yogattva Upanishad*, verse no. 23 in this context.

²In other words, as meditation and contemplation progresses, the ascetic's restless mind becomes quiet and calmed down. He enters that phase of Yoga which is called Samadhi, because all his bodily awareness of the external world of sense objectives also ceases in a gradual manner, and with it the restless tendencies of the sense organs. This happens because the sense organs of the body have a natural affinity towards this material world of sensual pleasure and comfort for it (the world) provides these sense organs the opportunity to gratify themselves. The sense organs are not concerned what affect this has on the creature's long term interests; they want immediate gratification. Hence, when the mind and its sub-conscious are pulled away from this world, the body naturally becomes quiet and calm. This is symbolised by saying that the vital winds in the body have become calm and quiet, because all efforts of the body are made possible by one or other of these winds.

According to *Subalo Upanishad*, canto 9, verse no. 14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there ten winds in the body, and they perform specialized tasks as follows. (1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaana—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaan—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Samaana—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambh—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antarayam—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naag—this controls the 'Chitta' or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

Under ordinary circumstances the mind is constantly restless because it is being fed by stimuli received by the sense organs of perceptions and must simultaneously respond to them along with ordering the organs of action to act accordingly. By attaining success in Hath Yoga, the physical gross body is controlled which in its wake would help to control the mind and its sub-conscious. When this is brought about, the sense organs are forcibly stopped from being attracted towards the various sense objects of the world; the mind would therefore have no cause to be distracted. This results in obtaining a state of calmness and quietness. This is another way of saying that the 'winds have become quietened' because all the activities of the body are made possible by the winds.

These winds are like the many horses of the king's royal chariot which together help pull the latter under the control of an expert charioteer. An expert ascetic who has successfully done Hath Yoga is deemed to have established control over these winds by controlling the body and its sense organs. The winds now become one and stop their random activities and buffeting of the creature's mind and breaking his concentration and attention. This is metaphorically indicated by saying that he has established 'Laya Yoga' by merging all the different units of his existence and establishing them in one unit called the 'consciousness' (the Atma) at the micro level and with the supreme cosmic consciousness (Brahm) at the macro level. In other words, an expert ascetic who has been successful in controlling his sense organs as well as his mind by doing Hath Yoga has virtually reined in all these winds much like an expert charioteer controls the numerous horses of the king's chariot. Once this happens, all the winds work in sync with each other, i.e. their independent activities cease and they become one which results in calming of the body and its restlessness much like the case of the chariot moving

comfortably and pleasurably if the horses move in a coordinated manner instead of pulling randomly here and there to rock the vehicle.]”

(13) Hath Yoga—

The Hath Yoga is the Yoga that teaches how to bring about the union of Pran (the breath, the vital wind that resides in the upper part of the body) and the Apaana (the wind that moves down in the body and helps in digestion and excretion, the vital wind that lives in the lower part of the body) by means of strict following of the eight fold path of Yoga such as observance of Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna, concentration and visualization of the presence of the Supreme Being in the point of the forehead where the root of the nose meets the middle of the eyebrows, and Samadhi. It teaches the practical aspects of spiritual Yoga. It teaches the practical aspects of spiritual Yoga and includes various exercises—Bandhs, Aasans, Mudras and Pranayam. The concept of Hath Yoga has been exhaustively explained in Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, and in Yog Tattva Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 24-129.

During medieval times, around 11-12th century A.D., it was the renowned sage Guru Gorakhnath, after whom a city of the same name exists in modern state of Uttar Pradesh in India, who had practiced and preached the practice of Hath Yoga based on the principles of Patanjali’s Yog Sutra (circa 200 B.C.).

The origin of this system of Yoga practice is however ascribed to primordial Shiva known as Adinath, the primordial Lord. [Hath Yoga Pradipika, 1/2.]

The *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 133-134 is very explicit in this when it says—

“Verse no. 133 = The letter ‘ha’ of the Mantra So-a-ham stands for the sun and its divine glories. The letter ‘sa’ of the Mantra So-a-ham stands for the moon and its divine glories’—when the ascetic does the full exercise of Yoga with this eclectic understanding and faith, he symbolically establishes a union between these two divine entities because they are part of the same Mantra. Such Yoga is called ‘Hath Yoga’ (133).

“Verse no. 134 = When a union between the individual Atma (soul) of the practitioner of Yoga, called the ‘Kshetrageya’¹, and the Parmatma (the supreme Soul) is brought about by this practice of Hath Yoga², then this Yoga eliminates the very cause of all spiritual and other problems that have been tormenting the ascetic till now³ (134).

[Note—¹The word *Kshetrageya* means one who is the Lord of a particular realm and knows about everything there; he is responsible for everything being done in his realm and is almost like a commander or magistrate for that area. Since the Atma, or the pure conscious soul of a person is the supreme authority as far as that individual person is concerned, it is not only responsible for what that person does but is the true identity of that person much like the magistrate or the commander represents the king or the government in his person and all his actions are deemed to be done on behalf of the king or the government though he is an independent person.

²The *Hath Yoga* is the Yoga that teaches how to bring about the union of Pran (the breath, the vital wind that resides in the upper part of the body) and the Apaana (the wind that moves down in the body and helps in digestion and excretion, the vital wind that

lives in the lower part of the body) by means of strict following of the eight fold path of Yoga such as observance of Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna, concentration and visualization of the presence of the Supreme Being in the point of the forehead where the root of the nose meets the middle of the eyebrows, and Samadhi. It teaches the practical aspects of spiritual Yoga and includes various exercises—Bandhs, Aasans, Mudras and Pranyam.

³The union of the individual soul and the supreme Soul is the main spiritual objective of Yoga. It therefore strives to bring about a meeting of the Kshetrageya and the Parmatma. All problems that the creature faces is due to the fact that it has forgotten its high pedigree and origin; it has forgotten that it is the Supreme Being personified. This is because the pure consciousness of the individual and the cosmic consciousness is the one and the same, albeit viewed on different scales—the former is at the micro level while the latter is at the macro level of existence. Had the creature been aware of this basic tenet, there would have been no question of it getting bogged down and entangled in worldly delusions and their attendant problems. To remove this apparent artificial dichotomy is the main spiritual purpose of Yoga.]”

The *Yoga Tattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 24-25 describes Hath Yoga as follows—“Now listen to Hath Yoga. Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna, to visualise the presence of Lord Hari (Vishnu, the supreme Lord) in the center of the eyebrows (at the site where the so-called third eye of wisdom and transcendental knowledge is located), and the neutral state of Samadhi (when one becomes oblivious of the surroundings and remains in a state of perpetual ecstasy and bliss of self and conscious realisation)—these are the various limbs of Yoga that comes under the definition of Hath Yoga (24-25).

[Note—The terms used above need brief introduction. According to Patanjali who is considered to be the greatest exponent of Yoga, the latter consists of 8-fold path. These are briefly the following—(1) *Yam* or self restraint of the senses; (2) *Niyam* or observance of certain sacrosanct rules; (3) *Aasan* or postures for meditation; (4) *Pranyam* or breath control exercises for purification of the body and mind; (5) *Pratyahar* or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (6) *Dhaarna* or having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; (7) *Dhyan* or contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect, such as visualizing the presence of the supreme Brahm in the point of the forehead between the two eyebrows; and (8) *Samadhi* or a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation. These eight fold path of Yoga have been listed in *Varaaha Upanishad*, canto 5, verse no. 12—12 ½ of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, as well as in *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 28-34, and *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 2-10 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.]”

(14) Kundali Yoga—

According to another interpretation based on Patanjali’s Yogsutra, it is called ‘Kundalini Yoga’. This is the physical aspect of Yoga by which various techniques are employed to kindle the latent dynamic cosmic energy present in the spiritual aspirant’s body in a dormant form as a coiled Kundalini located at the base of the spine. This arousal or activation of the Kundalini helps the spiritual aspirant to harness its energy for his

spiritual objectives, and is therefore called ‘Shakti Chaalan’ or ‘activation of latent spiritual energy’ in Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 7-8. This method has been described in detail all some of the Upanishads dealing with Yoga, notably the Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 1, 7-8, 65-87; the Yoga Tattva Upanishad both of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, and in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 62-65 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. Since Kundalini activation is an integral part of full-fledged Yoga, it naturally accompanies the practice of the eight-fold form of Yoga.

The *Bhavana Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 2, stanza no 12 says that “The knowledge that the astounding Shakti of Brahm (i.e. the cosmic energy, stupendous powers and the dynamism of Brahm) resides inside the aspirant’s own body in a subtle manner inside the coiled energy center called the Kundalini is known as ‘Gyan Shakti’. [This is because it is not easy to come to know about it, and only self-realised and enlightened ascetics who have attained high level of spiritual attainment are able to witness the Kundalini. Further, unfolding the energy trapped in the Kundalini is a tedious process of Yoga, but once successfully done it opens the door for the ascetic to acquire immense mystical powers that are super-human. He can do many things which an ordinary man just cannot imagine even in his dreams. For a enlightened ascetic who has known the powers of the Kundalini and has harnessed it, there is no limitations to what he can do or achieve.] (2/12).”

(15) Samadhi Yoga—

The concept of Samadhi is closely interlinked with the concept of contemplation and meditation or Yoga which culminate in Samadhi. Yogis also experience supreme bliss and an exhilarating feeling of spiritual ecstasy during Samadhi. Simply put, it is a trance like state when the consciousness has no perception of the external, physical world of sense objects and, on the contrary, it experiences the bliss of the pure self. This leads to an ecstatic state.

The term Samadhi is derived from the Sanskrit root ‘Dha’ which means to put or to place. To this root are added prefixes ‘Sam’ (well) and ‘Aa’ (fully). Thus the word Samadhi means ‘putting or placing the mind fully well’. In Vedanta, Samadhi means the knowledge that identifies the Atma with Brahm. It is commonly used to mean ‘absorption or meditation’. The state of Samadhi is free from the dual defects (faults) of duality (that the creature and Brahm are separate) and effort (diligence in deeds and actions aimed towards the goal). That is, during the state of Samadhi, the creature loses its self independent identity and no effort is then required to experience the bliss of the supreme realisation of the absolute Truth—which is the Atma and Brahm are the same, are infinite and eternal.

Samadhi is a spiritual state of transcendental bliss obtained when one has accessed the super-consciousness. It is a trance-like state when the person is unaware of the surrounding world. He might be wide awake in the physical world at the physical plane of existence, but internally he is lost in deep meditation and contemplation. He might go about his daily routine but remains lost in his thoughts. It is not a mental disorder but a state of transcendental existence of consciousness.

The great exponent of Yoga, sage Patanjali, has defined Samadhi in his great magnum opus 'Yog Sutra'. According to it, there are five steps of Yoga. The first five, i.e. Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam and Pratyahara are considered external processes or 'Bahiranga Yoga', while the last three, i.e. Dharna, Dhyan and Samadhi are called the internal processes or 'Antaranga Yoga'. Patanjali says in his 12th maxim of the first chapter of Yog Sutra that success in Yoga can be achieved by a coordination of practice and detachment. While 'practice' obviously implies the observation of rules and steps of Yoga as defined in Yoga treatises, 'detachment' means the consciousness that has given up desires for objects either seen or heard of. This detachment should be comprehensive in the sense that the practitioner of Yoga should also be indifferent towards the three Gunas or qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama that dominate all behavioral patterns in this world.

These eight steps of Yoga designed by Patanjali are meant to guide the spiritual aspirant gradually and in a systematic manner to progress higher in his spiritual endeavours and ultimately achieve the supreme state of eternal blissfulness that comes with inner awakening and experiencing the divine source of light and enlightenment that resides in one's own bosom.

Patanjali has stressed that Samadhi is the eclectic and mystical state of the mind when it is full of the revelation of the object concentrated upon, a state in which the aspirant loses awareness of all external as well as internal existence. He even forgets about himself.

It should be noted here that the second last step (Dhyan) which leads to Samadhi is a 'reflective knowledge', i.e. it consists of three elements of knowledge. These are—the 'Dhyata' or the awareness of the person who concentrates, the 'Dhyan' or the process of concentrating, and 'Dhyeya' or the object concentrated or meditated upon. It is like saying 'I am meditating on such and such object'. When these distinctions are removed, then it is the state of Samadhi.

The main thrust of Yoga is not mere arrest of the mind or mere physical exercises, but train the aspirant to realise his true self and its divine nature by rigorously following certain well defined and tested techniques. During Samadhi all distinctions between the external and internal states of existence are removed, and one state of uniformity and universality is achieved.

There are two types of Samadhis—(i) Savikalpa Samadhi (absorption characterised by the perception of division, distinction or difference) and (ii) Nirvikalpa Samadhi (absorption free from division, distinction or difference). The Savikalpa Samadhi is reached after long practice of the tenet 'I am Brahm' (i.e. there is no difference between me and Brahm). Unlike this practice wherein the seeker had to exert himself to maintain the thought that 'I am Brahm', during the Savikalpa Samadhi there is an effortless thought of 'I am Brahm'. This Samadhi is characterised by the perception of the distinction of the triumvirate consisting of (a) Meditator (Dhyatra), (b) Meditated object (Dheya) and (c) Meditation process (Dhyan). Though the Meditator has withdrawn his mind from all thoughts and maintains a continuous flow of a single pointed thought that 'I am Brahm', he still continues to have the distinction between (a) I, the Meditator, (b) the Object, that I am Brahm and (c) the very physical act of meditation. Nevertheless, by virtue of the strength of knowledge that 'he is Brahm', the triumvirate becomes illusory or imaginary just like the perception of various shapes of water— such as

whirlpool, wave, bubble, foam/froth etc. are nothing else but water, or the water in a cup, a glass, a jar, a tray, a pond, a lake, a river, and ocean may have different names and contours but are water nonetheless.

Sri Sankaracharya has cited the example of a clay elephant (Sarva Vedanta Siddhanta Saar Sangraha, verse nos. 821-822) to say that the elephant form does appear in spite of the knowledge that it is, after all, clay. Similarly, in spite of the knowledge that everything is Brahman, the triumvirate does exist in Savikalpa Samadhi.

Nirvikalpa Samadhi—during this state, the ideal that I am the all-pervading Brahman takes firm root and it puts an end to all ignorance. The term means ‘no division or distinction or difference’. Here the seeker has no distinction between the triad of meditator, the object of meditation, and the process of meditation.

The main difference between these two Samadhis is that in the former there is the ‘knowledge or awareness’ that I am Brahman while in the latter it is the ‘being’ of I am Brahman. The difference of knowing and being is quite evident. It is one thing to theoretically ‘know’ that I am Brahman and quite different to ‘be’ Brahman. When the thought I am Brahman becomes effortless and complete, the meditator loses the distinction between himself, the object (Brahman) and the process (meditation) — all merge into one entity. In this Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the meditator loses the distinction between himself (I) and the object (Brahman). As a result, the ego that ‘I am meditating upon Brahman’ is vanished, and with it, the triad. By extension, it means ‘there is no experience of distinction between the knower (meditator) and the known (Brahman)’.

In Savikalpa Samadhi, the thought ‘I am Brahman’ is available for perception while in Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the same thought is not available for perception. A lump of salt floating in water will be seen as distinct from water (Savikalpa Samadhi) but when that lump of salt dissolves in water, no one can see it; there is no distinction between the water and the salt (Nirvikalpa Samadhi).

The Nirvikalpa Samadhi is the plunging of the consciousness into the ocean of bliss encapsulated inside the causal body of the creature. All ignorance pertaining to the world is dispelled and therefore the world comes to an end simply because it exists only due to ignorance. Age, caste, position, opinion— none of these is a bar in entering the chamber of the self during Samadhi. It is open to all who seek it.

To conclude, we can say that Samadhi means that state when the seeker attains the last stage in meditation when there is no agitation, and its place is taken over by utter silence or trance like state. In that silence, the cessation of the flow of thoughts results in annihilation of the mind, and with it, the body. When the thought processes cease, there can be no discrimination taking place. When discrimination ceases, the intellect cannot exist. Hence, in that final moment of silence, when the mind and intellect are dissolved—the thoughts are vanquished, the mind is conquered, discrimination is absent and the intellect is annihilated—the erstwhile individual merges with the infinite reality, resulting in supreme and endless bliss and beatitude.

The concept of Samadhi has been explained in many Upanishads, such as the following—(i) Shukla Yajur Veda tradition’s *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad*, Brahmin 1, Canto 1, verse no.9-10 and Brahmin 2, Canto 3, verse nos. 3-6; *Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 32; *Paingalo-panishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 4-5; *Adhyatma Upanishad*, verse nos. 35-40; *Muktiko-panishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 53-56.

(ii) Krishna Yajur Veda's *Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad*, verse nos. 60-67; *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 75 and Canto 3, verse no. 75; *Tejobindu Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 37-42, Canto 5, verse no. 34; *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 6, verse no. 75.

(iii) Sam Veda tradition's *Mahopanishad*, Canto 6, *Jabal Darshan Upanishad*, Canto 10.

(iv) Atharva Veda's *Shandilya Upanishad*, Canto 1, section 11; *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 28, 48-52; Canto 4, verse nos. 62-63; Canto 5, verse nos. 49, 78-80; *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 2.

Now, let us see what the Annapurna Upanishad has to say on Samadhi—
 “Canto 1, verse no. 28 = A person whose mind is convinced that the Atma or pure consciousness is free from being tainted or affected by any of the qualities characteristic of this world is the one who has truthfully understood what the Atma is, and is therefore truly ‘self-realised’. Such a wise man is internally calmed, serene and peaceful, as well as in a state of bliss and contentedness.

When this state is achieved, it is called the state of Samadhi (28).

“Canto 1, verse no. 48 = Oh Brahmin (i.e. the learned sage Nidagh)! Those who have a well-controlled and trained mind, those whose mind has stopped vacillating and remaining in a state of constant flux, those who have inculcated the noble virtues of equanimity and dispassion—such people are eternally contented and at peace with themselves. They are able to analyse things properly and make judicious decisions dispassionately because their mind is free from any kind of bias and prejudice.

This state of existence of the mind has been defined by wise men as ‘Samadhi’ that is also known as ‘Para Pragma’—the supreme and transcendental state of existence when the mind is not affected by anything of the world, when the aspirant remains completely unmoved by his surroundings, when he is absolutely lost in the subtle and sublime world of the Atma which is pure consciousness and the spiritual ‘truth’ of creation as opposed to the gross world of the sense organs or the one created by the mind, and when he has attained the supreme knowledge of the Atma that is not only ‘truthful’ but also beyond the grossness of the world created by the mind.

It is the state of ‘Samadhi’ or trance-like existence when the mind is completely obliterated and only consciousness exists in its pristine pure state; it is the supreme transcendental state of existence and awareness that is known as ‘Para Pragma’ (48).

“Canto 1, verse no. 49 = In this state of ‘Samadhi’ that a seeker has reached on obtaining ‘Para Pragma’ (i.e. when one has become totally indifferent to the artificial world by becoming self-realised and experiencing the presence of the pure consciousness in his own inner-self), there is no trace of any kind of negativity—such as for instance, there are no wants, there are no confusions and doubts and their attendant perplexities and consternations, there is no trace of pride, ego and arrogance. [Rather, it is the state of utmost contentedness, fulfillment and ecstasy; it is a state of high degree of equanimity and broad vision.]

In fact, this type of Samadhi (i.e. the Samadhi marked by ‘Para Pragma’) is more stable than even the mountain known as Mt. Meru¹.

[In other words, the transcendental state of existence called Samadhi that is obtained after one has attained knowledge of the 'truth' of the Atma that comes with self-realisation, and which automatically excludes his involvement with the gross world, is a very stable state of existence so much so that no temptations of the world are strong enough to disturb this state and its attendant peace and tranquility, its accompanying bliss and ecstasy.] (49).

[Note—¹Mt. Meru—The Meru mountain is also called 'Sumeru'—the 'golden one'. The word 'Meru' literally means one that reflects light like a mirror or crystal. It is described in the Purans as the fabulous mythological mountain that forms the axis of the whole world. It is much like mount Olympus of Hindu mythology. All the planets revolve around it. It is compared to the cup or the seed-vessel of the lotus, the leaves of which symbolize the different Dvipas or continents and islands. The holy river Ganges from the heaven on its summit, and from there it divides into four streams and flows down to the rest of the world. The four Lokpals or the custodians of the four directions of the celestial compass occupy the corresponding face of this mountain which is said to be made of gold and glittering gems.

Its height is said to be one lakh Yojans which is equivalent to roughly 8 lakh miles. [1 lakh = 1,00,000 units; 1 Yojan = approx. 8 miles.]

Out of this huge size, 16,000 Yojans (8 x 16,000 miles) is under the ground, and 84,000 Yojans (8 x 84,000 miles) above the ground. On its top there is a flat plateau of approx. 32,000 Yojans (8 x 32,000 miles). It is here that Brahma the creator and his mind-born sons such as Daksha and the Saptarishis live. [refer Mahabharat, Vanaparva, 162; Bhagvata, 5/16.]

It is situated in the mystical Jambudvipa (the huge island by the name of 'Jambu'), and Bharatvarsha (India) is said to be to its south. The abode of Lord Shiva known as Mt. Kailash, which is presently located in the northern reaches of the Himalayan mountain range, is said to be the same Mt. Meru.

The creator Brahma resides on its summit, and it is the meeting place of Gods, semi-Gods such as Gandharvas, and exalted sages and seers who have attained Brahm-hood.]

"Canto 1, verse no. 50 = Oh Brahmin (i.e. Nidagh)! The state of the mind and the sub-conscious when they are fulfilled and contented in every respect is called 'Samadhi'. [Because in this exalted state, the man would want and seek nothing; he gets such tremendous amount of bliss and peacefulness that he would not bother to seek a lesser amount of these grand virtues by turning towards the world and its material sense objects seeking bliss and happiness.]

This unparallel Samadhi is devoid of all things that need to be discarded, or about which one may have to think twice as to their utility, need and importance as far as the long term spiritual welfare of the aspirant is concerned. It is a stable state of the mind and sub-conscious when all his desires to obtain this and that have been overcome and eliminated for good (50).

"Canto 1, verse no. 51 = This highest form of Samadhi is said to have its only origin in the enlightenment and true wisdom that the Chitta (the sub-conscious mind) has obtained. In other words, the true form of Samadhi is obtained when the mind is illuminated (taught; made aware of; wizened) about the 'truth', and thereby becomes highly enlightened.

Those who are well-versed in the eclectic philosophy of the Vedas regard this as the Turiya state of existence (which is the transcendental state). [Hence, Samadhi and Turiya are equivalent to each other.] (51).

“Canto 1, verse no. 52 = The Sushupta state (or the ‘deep sleep state) of consciousness is on the threshold of the Turiya state; it precedes the Turiya state and is very close to it.

When the Mana (mind) and Ahankar (ego, pride) dissolve (i.e. when both the mind that harbours ego, and the ego that influences the working of the mind, are made ineffective, are neutralized) it is then that the aspirant is said to have reached the Sushupta state.

[The Sushupta state of existence is the deep sleep state that comes after the Swapna or the dreaming state of consciousness. It is the third state of existence of consciousness. In this state the mind and the sub-conscious are both defunct. The difference between the Sushupta and Turiya states is that the creature reverts to the Swapna state from the Sushupta state, but when he reaches the Turiya state this reversal does not happen. That is why the Turiya state is likened to Samadhi while the Sushupta state isn’t.] (52).

“Canto 4, verse no. 62 = A wise, enlightened and self-realised man should discard all sorts of Vasanas, and instead be established in the unmoving and the perpetual state of ‘Samadhi’—i.e. he should be perpetually calm and quiet like a man in the higher state of meditation when he has reached the transcendental state which is trance-like. Such a man, for instance, does all the deeds with his body, but internally he is absolutely serene and unruffled, being un-involved mentally, intellectually, emotionally and sentimentally in any of the deeds or actions of the body because he is in a state of deep contemplation upon his ‘self’, or his Atma, which is pure consciousness residing inside his inner-self. His focus on the ‘self’ precludes any chance of his mind being involved in the outside world, as the extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy that he enjoys while being focused on the Atma has no match in the temporary and artificial and transient happiness that one derives by being engrossed in the gross world through the equally gross body.]

He becomes so engrossed in Samadhi (deep meditation and contemplation) that he loses awareness of even his own existence as a creature with a gross body in a material world. And therefore, he is deemed to have attained the exalted state of ethereal existence which is eternal and infinite, a state which is without a beginning and an end. That is, his conscious ‘self’ dissolves in, or merges with, or becomes one with the eclectic entity known as the cosmic Consciousness. In other words, though he is not aware of the mundane and gross world, though he is unaware of the gross body, yet he is very much awake and aware, but this awareness and awake-ness now pertains to the higher plane of existence rather than the gross and lowly (62).

Canto 4, verse no. 63 = In this eclectic and exalted state of Samadhi (as described in verse no. 62), the consciousness (the Atma, the person’s true ‘self’) may be involved in various activities of the world—for instance the creature may be walking, may be touching different things, may be smelling something—but internally his subtle mind-intellect is not aware of any of these things. That is, he does not perceive anything in this world; for him there is no activity and no existence of the world. Therefore, he does not

get involved or engrossed in any of the deeds done in this world, or any of the numerous activities of the body. [This is because the creature becomes aware of anything in this world only when the mind is ready and willing to receive the impulses picked up by the sense organs of perception in the body when they come in contact with the world, and then interpret these signals so as to conclude that such and such thing is there. If the mind is not willing to do so, then nothing matters, nothing exists. The best way to witness this phenomenon in practical life is when the mind is deeply thinking about a certain thing. In this case, a person might be intently staring at something or even listening to people talking animatedly on a subject, but he would not be aware of either of them. A person sees, smells, hears, feels or tastes anything only when the mind accepts the relevant signal picked up by the concerned sense organs of perception in the body. If the mind is pre-occupied somewhere else then the man is not at all aware of the world where the sense organ of the body might be focused.]

It is actually the mind that does the function of perception on behalf of the Atma, with the body being merely an instrument to felicitate the mind in this function because the body bears the organs of perception through which the mind receives the impulses originating in the external world; the mind does not receive these impulses directly on its own. If the mind refuses to accept any of the inputs from the world though the sense organs have picked up the necessary signal, the Atma would not be aware of that particular perception. So, if the mind decides to shut itself off, the world would be shut off for the Atma. In other words, if the mind is fully detached from, and uninterested and un-involved in the affairs of the world which the body is involved in, the Atma too would be deemed to be detached, uninterested and un-involved for all practical purposes.]

A creature who has reached such an exalted and sublime state of existence when his mind does not register any impulses pertaining to this mundane existence as it is engrossed in contemplation, and when he thus stays in a perpetual state of Samadhi (which is a trance-like state of transcendental existence of consciousness that remains aloof from all grossness associated with the body as well as the world), the creature is deemed not to be involved in anything. Such an exalted creature lives in a virtual state of Amanask (refer verse no. 48) which is like a state of stupor since his mind has completely retracted itself from the outside world and its awareness, the mind has abandoned all its involvements in the gross world and its temptations, and instead has become meditative and contemplative. The mind is now engrossed in the thoughts of the 'self' rather than in the thoughts of the gross world and its sense objects as well as in the thoughts of the body and its demands for gratification. This is the ideal state of the mind of an enlightened and self-realised Jiva (creature; living being).

Such a creature becomes exemplarily neutral and indifferent to both the notions of sorrows as well as of joys. He does not feel dismayed or exhilarated at anything. In fact, his mind even fails to register the bliss of experiencing the pure consciousness that comes naturally during the process of meditation and contemplation, and which is enhanced and becomes overwhelming when the aspirant reaches the higher state of existence known as Samadhi—because the intensity of bliss and ecstasy experienced during this stage becomes so overwhelming, so overpowering, so intense and perpetual, reaching such a high pitch and acquiring such depth and amplitude that he becomes literally numbed by it. His mind and sub-conscious become so drenched and suffused by this ecstatic feeling

of bliss, felicity and beatitude that he fails to especially register these feelings in his mind.

[This can be illustrated with a simple example—when one eats only sweets, then after some time the taste buds fail to register the intensity of sweetness in a given dish because they are numbed by the overpowering sense of sweetness and become immune to its titillating and delicious effect. After some point, the eater would not even know that he is eating some delectable sweet dish. In fact, if one continues to eat only sweets without interspersing it with some other dish, a time would come when he would vomit, what to talk of relishing it.

On the other hand, if he combines it with some salty dish, then even the smallest morsel of the sweet would taste extremely sweet, delicious and immensely pleasing for the taste buds. So, when the mind is involved in the world, it gets a liberal dose of sorrow and joy. These are like the salty and sweet dishes cited above. In this situation, the smallest cause that can provide happiness and bliss to him is marked out, and the man can experience these senses. But in the case of Samadhi, there is only one, all-engulfing feeling of bliss, with nothing to disturb it, so the senses become numb to the feeling of bliss as now there is only bliss all around, with no trace of sorrows and pains.]

Therefore, in the absence of any disturbance of any kind, the state of Samadhi, the state of non-involvement of the mind and the sub-conscious, gives immense spiritual happiness, comfort and pleasure to the creature.

Such an exalted living being may appear to be stupid, ill-witted and dull externally, but he is immensely wise, enlightened and realised internally. He is perpetually happy and blissful not because he is a block-head or a mental patient whose mind is not working properly but because he has reached a higher level of consciousness that transcends the gross and the mundane.

[Ordinary people who are not sufficiently spiritually enlightened and empowered and wise are subjected to being buffeted by wave after wave of sorrows and happiness alternating with each other. They are tossed and turned like a plank of wood in a choppy ocean. But a wise, self-realised and enlightened man has attained the density and the gravity that comes with attainment of super conscious state of existence which can be compared to a huge ship that remains steady, stable and unaffected by even a fierce storm in the ocean. Therefore, when a man has acquired the gravity, depth and intensity of spiritual knowledge that comes with self-realisation, he would not at all be affected by any emotions or sentiments related to the body and the world.] (63).

“Canto 5, verse no. 49 = An ascetic who regularly practices only one type of spiritual philosophy symbolized by practicing only one type of Samadhi, and is steady and diligent in it—only such a wise and enlightened ascetic is able to expunge all other philosophies from his mental horizon, only he can prevent his mind from being confused and confounded about what to do and what to avoid. He can focus his efforts and attention on his chosen path more effectively, and walk this path more stridently and confidently, overcoming all hurdles that may occur.

[The term ‘Samadhi’ broadly means to remain focused on the pure consciousness and to live in a plane of existence that is known as transcendental. When in this state, the person is unaware of the world and the body, along with any of their activities. Here it implies that a man who does not waver or remain wobbly by being uncertain of the

veracity, the truthfulness and the effectiveness of the philosophy he is practicing, who does not keep oscillating between this and that as he is unable to decide what to do and what not to, who is certain as to what is true and what is false, and what his goal in life is, and who is certain and convinced of himself and the philosophy he practices—it is only such a man who can ever expect to succeed in his endeavour in any field in this world, whether mundane, secular or spiritual.

In other words, a spiritual aspirant must be of a firm and stabilized mind in order to realise his spiritual goals. An undecided, fluctuating and vicissitudinous mind which is a victim of confusion and perplexities can never ever lead the aspirant steadily to his spiritual goal. And what is this goal? It is to realise the truth of the Atma, the truth that comes with self-realisation that requires a focused mind and great diligence, the truth that, in its finer and higher forms, is equivalent to Brahm-realisation, and which translates into his final spiritual Mukti or Moksha (i.e. his spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation). He obtains freedom from all fetters representing delusions and ignorance that tie his soul down and shackle it to this world and the body. A freed creature enjoys bliss, beatitude and felicity; he enjoys happiness, ecstasy and contentedness that come when one has finally reached his desired goal or destination which had eluded him for generations. This is the fruition of Samadhi.]

Such a wise and enlightened man realises that the essence to which the Sankhya philosophy of Hinduism refers to is only ‘one’ and ‘non-dual’, and not many and varied. [He realises that the spiritual Truth known as ‘consciousness’ is only one and not two or more though the Sankhya philosophy refers to Tattwas or essential elements as being twenty-five in number.]

An ascetic who has known this secret is indeed not an ordinary man, but a highly attained and enlightened soul. He is ‘living being’ who has understood the truth of ‘life’ in a truthful manner. [In other words, he is not to be identified with a gross body now, but with the ‘living Atma’ that resides inside this body. Realisation or awareness of this ‘truth’ of life is a true form of wisdom and enlightenment.] (49).

“Canto 5, verse no. 78 - When an ascetic becomes self-realised and enlightened by concentrating his mind on the pure conscious Atma which is sublime, subtle and self-illuminated, he is able to experience its divine illumination everywhere without exception. [That is, in the higher echelons of spiritual attainment, a self-realised ascetic begins to see the ‘truth’ of the doctrine of Advaita or non-duality all around him in the form of the universal presence of the cosmic Consciousness. In other words, he sees nothing but Brahm everywhere. He sees the universal ‘truth’ behind the façade of falsehood.]

When he is firmly established in deep meditation and contemplation, he naturally becomes self-realised and self-enlightened when the sublime illumination emanating naturally from the ‘consciousness’ comes to the fore and begins to shine and light up his inner-self in a brilliant light known as ‘spiritual realisation’. It is then that he gets acquainted with his ‘truthful self’, his ‘real self’. [This is his Atma; it is pure consciousness. It is distinct from the gross body which is ‘dark’ if it is not ‘lighted’ by the presence of the self-illuminated Atma from the inside.] (78).

“Canto 5, verse no. 79 = When a self-realised and enlightened ascetic develops a holistic and natural view of non-duality as he begins to see all the creatures as a reflection of his

own self, and the same time realises that there is no basic difference between his own self and the other creatures because all are mirror images of the same cosmic entity known as pure Consciousness—it is then that he truly becomes a personification of the supreme Brahm. [He would have realised that ‘he’ is not the physical gross body but the sublime ‘consciousness’ known as the Atma, and that this Atma is the same in all the creatures. This Atma or ‘consciousness’ is known as Brahm at the macrocosmic level of creation. Since the entire creation is a manifestation of this cosmic Brahm, it obviously follows that it is also a mirror image of ‘his’ own ‘self’, which is his Atma in the form of ‘consciousness’. His own Atma is Brahm personified in his gross body in the same way as it is present in the gross bodies of all living beings. Refer Canto 5, verse no. 61.] (79).

“Canto 5, verse no. 80 = When an ascetic remains in a perpetual state of meditation and contemplation, and is able to develop a state of mind which sees no distinction between any two or more given things or situations in this world, when it has developed an exemplary level of wisdom that enables it to see the underlying uniformity and universality amidst external varieties, variations and dichotomies that are apparent in the external features of this creation—it is only then that such an ascetic is deemed to be inseparable and indistinguishable from the Atma. He is regarded as an image of the Atma which is universal and uniform in this creation (80).”

The *Shandilya Upanishad*, Canto 1, section 11 very succinctly describes Samadhi as follows—“It is a state of exalted and sublime existence when the Jiva-Atma and the Parmatma have become one—i.e. when the individual soul has become indistinguishable, inseparable and indivisible from the cosmic Soul of creation.

It is an exalted and sublime state when there is no distinction between the three basic units of creation that makes one aware of its existence—viz. the one who is the observer or seer of anything, the thing observed or seen, and the medium used in the process of observing or seeing. [For instance, when a man sees an object such as mountain, he is the seer, the mountain is the object seen, and the eye and its faculty of sight is the medium used in this process. Similarly, when a man hears some music, he is the one who hears, the music is the object heard, and the ears are the medium to complete the circuit or make hearing possible. During Samadhi all these three merge into one point—the spiritual aspirant reaches a state when all barriers between his individual self and the cosmic Self are removed and his Atma becomes one with the cosmic Atma that is all-pervading in this creation. The gross body which separates them is relegated to the background and rendered inconsequential; the Atma transcends the grossness of the body and assumes its primary cosmic form which is all-pervading and free from all encumbrances. It is like the air trapped in a mud-pot merging with the outer air when the pot is broken. Hence, Samadhi is a transcendental state of dissolution when all artificial distinctions and illusionary boundaries are done away with.]

Samadhi is marked by a state of extreme blissfulness, felicity and beatitude when all that remains and matters is the pure and sublime consciousness (1).’

The great spiritual benefits of Samadhi have been summarized in *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 6, verse no. 75 as follows—“Wise and expert ascetics establish uniformity between the different Vayus (vital winds of the body), the Bindu Chakra (i.e. the Agya Chakra

located in the forehead as well as the Sahasrar Chakra located in the top of the head because it is here that the vital winds start swirling like a whirlwind and it is here that the ascetic hears the Naad) and the Chitta (the mind and its subtle faculties of concentration and paying attention)—this helps them to coordinate their individual energy and vitality to obtain the sublime state of ecstasy and bliss which is tantamount to obtaining the elixir of life called Amrit. This is achieved during the state of Samadhi (which is stage in the practice of Yoga when the practitioner is completely lost in meditation and totally oblivious to any kind of external disturbances arising out of the world and the body)¹ (75).

[Note—¹It is during Samadhi that one is able to create favourable circumstances for the unification of all the vital winds present in the body, concentrate them in one place in the head, and then make them whirl around in circles to generate the vibration that lead to ecstasy and bliss, or the hearing of the Naad. Naturally, the mind and its ability to focus attention on any task at hand are very important components in this process—thereby bringing into focus the role and importance of the Chitta. Thus in Samadhi, the practitioner obtains the exalted state of consciousness when he is virtually submerged in an ocean of beatitude and ecstasy from which he derives immense sense of happiness and joy so much so that he would not like to move away from it and continue to drink this divine and eclectic nectar on a perpetual basis. He hears the Naad and its cosmic vibrations completely drown his other senses so much that he loses awareness of the external world as well as the body itself because their presence is felt or known only as long as the nerves carry relevant information to the brain and the latter is free to interpret this incoming information. With these two units numbed by the cosmic vibrations, the entire circuitry sort of short-circuits and the senses become practically numbed out of existence. The only thing that is heard and felt is the Naad and its attendant sensation of blissful feeling.]”

The *Tejobindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse nos. 37-42 describes the metaphysical significance of Samadhi. To quote—

“Verse no. 37 = The last step in spiritual endeavour is the eclectic and transcendental state of ‘Samadhi’. It is the apex of the pyramidal structure of all types of spiritual pursuits because it represents that perpetual state of supreme blissfulness obtained by complete enlightenment that comes with self-realisation and Brahm-realisation that transcends all other forms of mystical achievements.

When all the misconceptions, taints, deformations and defects of the mind and heart that have their origin in delusions and ignorance about the reality are eliminated, when they are thoroughly cleansed of all impure thoughts and made immune to all sorts of distractions and corrupting influences that ordinarily taint the creature’s immaculate ‘self’, and when this makes him steady, sincere and diligent in his spiritual pursuit, it is only then that the excellent notion of ‘I am Brahm personified’ dawns on the spiritual horizon of any spiritual aspirant. [In all other cases, if a person makes this statement, he is, in all probability, being deceitful and untruthful.]

Samadhi is that state of existence when all other thoughts are sincerely banished from the mind for good except the eclectic and sublime thought of ‘I am Brahm personified¹’. This eclectic thought takes firm hold and sweeps away all other thoughts from the spiritual aspirant’s mind and heart for good (resulting in the state of utter blissfulness described in verse no. 38 below) (37).

[Note--¹Here, the word 'I' refers to the pure conscious Atma residing in the subtle heart of the spiritually enlightened person. This individual Atma of the creature is a microcosmic counterpart of the all-pervading, supreme, transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. This Brahm has manifested itself in the form of the visible world consisting of animate creatures as well as inanimate things, and therefore all that exists is nothing but Brahm, including the person who makes this solemn statement 'I am Brahm personified'. Of course, as it is obvious here, if this statement comes from a convinced heart in a convincing manner, it is indeed a realisation of the great truth by such a man, and therefore he is indeed enlightened. Otherwise, such a statement is unwarranted and uncalled for, and it is full of deceit and like cheating one's own self as well as all the others around.

Since the aim of all spiritual pursuit is to realise this supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm, the ultimate Truth and Reality in creation, so when a person has sincerely made this statement without any trace of deceit and doubt that 'I am Brahm personified', it is deemed that he has realised that final goal of all spiritual endeavours, i.e. he has come to terms with the great doctrine of the Vedas that the Supreme Being known as Brahm is not somewhere high up in the sky but immediately here and even so close to the person that the person and Brahm are indistinguishable from one another. In other words, the enlightened person becomes as holy and divine as the cosmic Divinity itself.

Samadhi is the stage in spiritual efforts when the aspirant has transcended other stages in the spiritual hierarchy and reached a trance like state of existence marked by perpetual blissfulness obtained when one has tasted the nectar of eternity, beatitude and felicity springing forth from the pure conscious Atma, the true 'self' of the spiritual aspirant, which in turn is a personification of the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. When this realisation dawns upon the spiritual horizon of the aspirant, no other experiences matter.]

“Verse no. 38 = The eclectic sense of blissfulness, the perpetual state of beatitude and felicity obtained during Samadhi is eternal, natural, genuine, of a high profile and quality, effusive and effervescent in nature, while all other types of happiness and joys are false, artificial and transient.

Constant practice of Samadhi and other spiritual methods (as enumerated in this Upanishad) makes an ascetic perfect in his spiritual achievements, and he ultimately attains his goal of Brahm and 'self' realisation. He effectively becomes a personification of the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the true sense of the word. This divine enlightenment makes him spiritually liberated and delivered; he attains emancipation and salvation for his soul even while he is still alive in this world and has a physical body. This is called 'Jivan Mukti'—to be liberated and delivered even while living in this world with a gross body and going about one's normal duties vis-à-vis the world¹ (38).

[Note—¹In other words, when he has become enlightened and self-realised, it does not matter to him whether or not 'he' (i.e. his 'true self', the pure conscious Atma, the soul, the divine Spirit present in his body) has a physical body or not, for he had totally disassociated himself from the latter and remains in a complete detached state of mind. It does not matter to him whether or not his body suffers from any disease for instance, whether or not the body is comfortable or in discomfort, and so on and so forth.]

“Verse no. 39 = When he has reached this exalted state of existence as obtained during Samadhi, he does not need the help of any other means in his spiritual progress any further. He has become the ‘attained one’, the ‘realised one’, ‘the enlightened one’. Such a person is deemed to be a king amongst ascetics and spiritual aspirants. He has obtained mystical powers and potentials which are supernatural.

He becomes totally submerged and soaked in the thoughts of Brahm. All his sense perceptions, his mind and heart, as well as his faculty of speech become devoted to Brahm; they are centered around Brahm; Brahm becomes the pivot around which his entire being, his whole existence revolves.

This unique state of existence in which nothing exists and nothing else matters for him but Brahm makes such a devoted ascetic firmly established in the truthful form of Brahm realisation, i.e. he becomes a living embodiment of the glories and divinity of Brahm (39).

“Verse no. 40-41 = As soon as the ascetic reaches the state of Samadhi, numerous problems and hurdles suddenly present themselves before him, trying to deviate him from his path and demote him from his spiritual achievements. He is often enmeshed in their web and falls from his chosen path.

Some of these spiritual obstacles are the following—to deviate and waver from the chosen path to research the truth of Brahm, i.e. the path of Brahm-realisation, to be overcome with lethargy, indolence and inertia, to have a desire and longing to gratify the sense organs and enjoy the objects of these sense organs and their attendant pleasures and comforts, to have worldly passions, lust and yearnings, and be infatuated with the objects that arouse such emotions (40), to be engulfed in the darkness of ignorance and delusions causing bewilderment and confusions in the absence of light of truthful knowledge and erudition about the reality and its accompanying enlightenment and wisdom, to be deterred by efforts made during meditation which cause so much exertion that one begins to sweat, to be so much mentally distracted that it is difficult to fix attention on the chosen goal, etc.

A wise and erudite aspirant of spiritualism should exercise special caution and guard against these pitfalls and remain wary of them. He should painstakingly keep them at bay (41) [40-41.]

“Verse no. 42 = ‘One becomes what one thinks about constantly’—this is an established adage. So when one begins to remain indifferent to and immune from all emotions and thoughts other than that of Brahm, when one inculcates the habit of remaining in a state of perpetual indifference and non-involvement in anything pertaining to this existence other than the thoughts of Brahm, it is natural that gradually the mind and its natural tendencies withdraw from everything else and become concentrated on this one single point, the thoughts of Brahm.

Hence, the true state of Samadhi, its true accomplishment and its real consummation is when the ascetic begins to think that Brahm is present as his own self as affirmed and asserted by the great saying of the Vedas, i.e. ‘I am Brahm’. When this happens, the ascetic has come full circle. This is the holistic and all-inclusive view and philosophy pertaining to Brahm. The ascetic must practice this state of fulsome realisation of Brahm during his Samadhi (42).

The *Tejobindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 5, verse no. 34 has this to say of Samadhi—“The Atma is beyond the purview of the two types of Samadhis, and neither can it be measured by any yardstick nor can any criterions be made applicable to it.

The Atma is such an exalted and omniscient entity that it is outside the jurisdiction of such concepts as ‘Agyan’ (ignorance) and ‘Avivek’ (lack of wisdom)¹ (34).

[Note--¹This is because the Atma is eternally wise and enlightened, being the supreme consciousness from which everything has emerged, including all forms of knowledge and wisdom. It is like a treasury of Gyan—knowledge, and Vivek—wisdom and erudition. So there is no question of it being ignorant and stupid.]”

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 75, and Canto 5, verse no. 75 describe the concept of Samadhi in the following way—

“Canto 2, verse no. 75 = Just like a lump of salt placed in water gets dissolved in it and becomes indistinguishable from water, the merger of the Atma (the pure consciousness) and the Mana (the mind) is called the state of Samadhi (the trance-like transcendental state of existence when the man is unaware of his surroundings, including his own body) (75).

“Canto 5, verse no. 75 = It is the Atma, the pure consciousness and the true ‘self’ of the ascetic, that is responsible for creation of this world through the medium of the body consisting of both the gross organs such as the organs of perceptions and organs of action, as well as the subtle organ of the mind-intellect complex. Hence, being the creator or progenitor of this creation (world), it is the Atma itself which can conclude it or bring it to an end, and no body else.

Therefore, the stage when the spiritual aspirant has realised this quintessential truth about the Atma vis-à-vis the body and the world is said to be Jivan Mukta—i.e. one who has obtained liberation and deliverance even while he is alive, has kept his gross body, and lives normally in this world. [This is because he would not be ‘personally’ involved with either the activities of the body or the world. The word ‘personally’ here would not mean his body but his Atma which would remain a mute spectator and non-involved with everything and in anything. It is like freeing oneself from the serfdom of the body as well as the world. The Atma disassociates itself from everything related to the gross and perishable body as well as the equally gross and perishable world.]

When this thinking and behaviour becomes natural to the aspirant, when it is not artificially done by him to gain praise and honour, when he is not acting as an imposter trying to pose as an upright, wise, self-realised and enlightened man to deceive others with ulterior motives, when he has no pretensions of being holy and pious man while slyly eyeing this world and its material objects which would be showered upon him by faithful devotees who would fall prey to his deceitful behaviour—it is then that he is said to have accomplished complete success in obtaining his spiritual objectives. He is fulfilled and complete; he has obtained the ‘Nishpati Bhumika’ which is the last of the four Bhumikas and the culmination of Yoga and spiritual practice (75).”

The *Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 60-67 beautifully describes the concept of Samadhi, its types, its characteristic features and its achievements vis-à-vis the spiritual aspirant's endeavour to find self and Brahm realisation. It describes the two types of Samadhis (*Savikalpa* and *Nirvikalpa*) also. Now let us see what it has to say—

“Verse no. 60. The spiritual aspirant should remain in a state of perpetual Samadhi, both internally as well as externally. [That is, he should remain in a virtual state of meditation and be focused on the Truth and Reality at all times. The state of Samadhi is the state when the man is totally oblivious of the body and the surrounding world, and instead remains submerged in the bliss obtained by self-realisation and being in constant communion with the consciousness. Such a man would lead an ordinary life but remain completely detached at the mental and intellectual level from all things and deeds done by the body.]

The heart (representing the true ‘self’ or the consciousness known as the Atma because the latter is said to reside in the cave-like subtle sky of the heart) is involved in two types of Samadhi—(a) *Savikalpa* (one having more than one alternatives or versions) and (b) *Nirvakalpa* (that which is one of its kind and has no alternatives or versions) (60).

“Verse nos. 61-65 = The Savikalpa Samadhi is of two types—(a) one Samadhi that is literally pierced or disturbed or deflected or impinged upon by the numerous attractive sights of the world that one sees due to one's natural instincts and desires to see pleasant and endearing objects of the world that seem attractive and enticing for the senses, and (b) one Samadhi that is disturbed by various sounds and words that one hears in this world.

The disturbance, hindrance and deflections caused to Samadhi by the sights of the physical world can be overcome by meditating and contemplating thus—‘These sights of the visible and gross world that disturb Samadhi are created by the inborn Kaam (worldly desires, passions and yearnings for the visible and gross sense objects of the world) that a creature has, whereas the Atma is pure consciousness and expected to be only a mere neutral witness to their existence, without having any desire to obtain them or getting involved with them or attracted towards them.’ [When this erudition develops, the man would neglect the visible attractions of the world and remain focused on his Samadhi.]

Similarly, the disturbance caused to Samadhi by various sounds is taken care of by meditating and contemplating thus—‘I do not have any company with whom to talk (i.e. I live alone in a secluded place, in absolute serenity and calmness). I am a personification of the virtues of truth, consciousness and bliss. I am self-illuminated. I am non-dual, one, unparalleled, unique, immutable and indivisible.’ [That is, I am an ethereal divine entity that neither hears anything nor speaks anything.]

A spiritual aspirant who neglects the visible world and its noises, and instead remains submerged in the thoughts of the Atma, the consciousness and the truth, he is said to be in a state of ‘Nirvakalpa Samadhi’. His condition is stable, steady and unwavering like the steadily burning, un-flickering and erect flame of a lighted oil lamp placed at a place where there is no movement in air whatsoever.

These are the two types Samadhis called Savikalpa and Nirvakalpa that have their seat in the heart, i.e. they are internal Samadhis and are done with the help of the inner thoughts of the ascetic.

In the same way, when a man focuses his attention on some object in the external world, his mind becomes fixed on it and he thinks of nothing else except it. This is the external state of Samadhi.

This external Samadhi again can be classified as follows—

(a) The one that depends upon the awareness of the ‘seer’ and the ‘seen’. [For example, ‘I’ am or ‘he’ is seeing that ‘animal’ or ‘tree’].

(b) The separation of the external gross physical form and name of each thing that is seen from its essential form or fundamental principle that is present in it, i.e. to see the same consciousness prevailing uniformly and universally in each unit of the living world. [For example, to see the same consciousness as being present in a horse and an elephant, or in a boy and a girl, is to see the fundamental principle operating in anything that has a name and form instead of seeing only its externally visible form which do not tell the real, truthful and complete story. If this is extended further to the physical world, a truly wise man would see the element ‘water’ in everything liquid or fluid, such as milk and fruit juice which have different names and external forms but are nevertheless ‘liquid or fluid’, and liquidity and fluidity cannot come without water being present in them].

(c) The uniformity and universality of vision when one sees the same cosmic consciousness in everything in the external world. In this higher state of awareness, the ascetic does not even see any external forms and knows no names except the fact that the same cosmic Consciousness or the supreme transcendental Brahm is present everywhere. In other words, in the higher stages of Samadhi the spiritual aspirant is firmly rooted in the eclectic concept of ‘non-duality’ which becomes a universal phenomenon for him. There is no such thing as ‘that’ and ‘this’ anymore.

(d) The last stage creates a state of existence when there are no perplexities and confusions, when there are no distractions, deflections and disturbances. It is like the state of complete shock when one becomes dumbfounded, dumbstruck, non-responsive and stunned into non-activity. [Since at a higher level of awareness and enlightenment the spiritual aspirant is able to see the universality of Brahm everywhere; since this world appears uniform to him there would be nothing that would stand out to either attract his attention or repel it; since the same consciousness prevails in each unit of the living world there is no question of any dichotomy arising, and hence no cause of any confusion and perplexity regarding what is true and what is false. Therefore, for such a realised and enlightened aspirant, the entire creation becomes Brahm personified (61-65).

“Verse no. 66 = A wise spiritual aspirant should spend his time in practicing these six forms of Samadhis (as described in verse nos. 61-65).

When one has become wisened, enlightened and aware of the universal presence of the Truth known as Brahm everywhere, both in the external world as well as inside his own self as the Atma, an awareness which makes him freed from the fetter of ignorance that makes him proud of his body and become self-centered instead of having a universal and broad outlook and vision of this creation that is non-dual, all-inclusive and absolute—it is only then that he experiences the nectar of supreme bliss dripping from the presence of the Absolute and Truth everywhere. [That is, when the spiritual aspirant no

longer thinks that he is a separate entity with a distinct body that has its independent existence in this world and the rest of the material objects of the world are meant for his consumption and use, when he stops viewing the rest of the world with self-centric eyes of selfishness, when he stops judging the usefulness or uselessness of anything in this world with selfish criterion of whether or not that thing can gratify the sense organs of the body and their natural instincts, when he does not treat anything or anybody as more or less important than his own self, when he has developed an eclectic view of the universality and uniformity of the ‘self’ and the Atma—it is only then that he is entitled to be called ‘Brahm-realised’. It is obvious that such a man would become calm, placid and tranquil like a mountain lake; he would become steady and unwavering like the flame of a lighted lamp inside a glass enclosure where there is no movement in air.] (66).

“Verse no. 67 = When a spiritual aspirant attains this high level of enlightenment of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation, when he sees the absolute, pure and flawless Brahm as being all-permeating, all-inclusive and all-encompassing, it is then that all the knots of his heart are untied, all the confusions and perplexities that keep churning his mind-intellect and heart endlessly, thereby robbing them of their inherent peace and happiness, are dispelled. [That is, all the bonds that bind a man to the artificial world and its destructive as well as ruinous charms, all the fetters that shackle him to the deluding world and compel him to remain chained to it in the hope of possessing it and enjoying it which in turn lead him to get sucked in the vortex of birth and death—all such negative and self-destructive factors are dispensed with. The spiritual aspirant feels like a bird decaged and is able to see the broad and vast sky not from behind the bars of the cage but from the outside. This view of the sky from outside the cage is unhindered and untampered by the bars of the cage. The bird watches for sometime and then takes to its wings. Similarly, the spiritual aspirant frees himself from the fetters that had been shackling him till now, sees what it means to be enlightened and have a broad vision of creation, and then finds his ‘self’ spiritually liberated. He develops a spiritual perspective with a sight and vision that is as vast and holistic as the surrounding space around him].

In this eclectic and exalted state of existence, all his deeds are automatically destroyed. [This is because he would realise that the deeds are done by the body and not the ‘self’ or the Atma, thereby absolving the latter from the consequences of the former. An ordinary man does various deeds to gain something from his efforts; he has some desires and aspirations, and makes efforts to fulfill his wishes. But an enlightened and spiritually attained man has nothing to desire; he is completely fulfilled. In other words, the need to do anything does not arise, the need to make efforts to achieve some object is not necessitated, and therefore the ‘deeds’ are not done. This statement that ‘deeds are not done’ must be understood in the correct perspective. It does not mean that the wise, self-realised and enlightened man would lie idle and waste his time sleeping—nothing is farther from the truth. What is meant here is that in spite of doing everything that comes his way with his gross physical body, an enlightened man would not get mentally and emotionally involved or attached with any of the deeds or things. His ‘self’, his ‘spirit’, would remain aloof, disinterested and detached like a neutral observer who does not participate in anything, or like a bystander lost in his thoughts watching the traffic whiz past him on a busy road without even being aware of which car or bike has gone by or even bothering to know about it.] (67).”

According to *Muktiko-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 53-54, there are *two types of Samadhis*—viz. Sampragyat and A-sampragyat. Now let us see what they have to say on the subject—

“verse no. 53 = When ‘Ahankar’ (ego, false pride, haughtiness, arrogance, vanity) is destroyed as a result of prolonged practice of ‘Dhyan’ (concentration and meditation on the absolute truth, the pure nature of the self, treating the Atma as an image of the supreme Brahm and becoming aware of its supreme conscious form), and the latent, natural and inherent tendencies of the mind of the seeker become infused with the glorious and magnificently powerful current of divinity and holiness emanating from the supreme transcendental Brahm, then the state thus obtained by the spiritual seeker/aspirant is called ‘Sampragyat Samadhi’ (a trance-like state of concentration of the mind wherein the soul does not know its true self fully; it does not thoroughly know itself) (53).

“verse no. 54 = When all agitations of the mind and sub-conscious cease, when there is total self realisation by the spiritual seeker/aspirant about his true self, then he gets into a trance-like state called ‘Asampragyat Samadhi’ which gives him supreme bliss, tranquility, peace and happiness. This state is very dear to Yogis (54).

(16) The Avedan Yoga—

This form of Yoga has been described in *Akchu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no 3. Now, let us examine what it has to say—“The ‘Avedan Yoga’ or the higher form of true Yoga¹ is the eclectic state of existence when one is not even aware of anything else except the existence of the pure consciousness in the world around him (i.e. as the Atma, whether in the form of the individual creature or as the cosmic power known as Brahm). It is the enlightened state of awareness when nothing else exists or matters for the spiritual aspirant except the Atma at his individual level and the supreme all-pervading cosmic Atma called the Parmatma at the grander state of existence. It is the exalted state of spiritual existence when the mind is calmed down and its natural tendencies overcome to the extent that it is virtually rendered ineffective and unable to influence the aspirant any longer, being as good as eliminated or destroyed for all practical purposes. It is the state when there is an effortless and seamless blending of the individual soul with the cosmic Soul so as to establish an entity that is non-dual and uniform in every possible way.

So, when you have thus become spiritually enlightened and achieved the exalted state of self-awareness of the infinite divinity of your soul, you could continue to live in this world and perform your duties and carry on with your routine life without getting unduly perturbed and restless about anything, or getting involved in anything related to the delusions of the material world. You must be careful not to become careless in anything you do, and always be on the alert so that you do not fall in any kind of delusions that act as spiritual traps for the ordinary man who is careless and less diligent. You must be careful that neither are you mentally, emotionally and sentimentally

involved in anything or deed that you do, nor are you too indifferent and careless about what you do so as to ruin the work done by you². [In other words, be careful and vigilant. Do anything in a dispassionate manner, thinking that it is your destined and designated duty to do certain things, but do not get mentally, emotionally or sentimentally attached with either the deeds or their results. This way you would be doing them diligently but with a sense of un-involvement, thereby doing them with the best of your abilities but remaining free from their attendant headaches such as the anxiety related to their results which might cause you fear of suffering from their bad effects or getting unnecessary excited about their expected good results.] (3).

[Note--¹*Avedan Yoga* may be defined as a sincere effort made by a spiritual aspirant to do everything possible to bring about a seamless union between his individual soul with the supreme cosmic Soul of creation. Due to misconceptions and delusions, his soul appears to have obtained a separate identity from the cosmic universal Soul, and the main thrust of Yoga is to remove this false and illusionary distinction and dichotomy between them and instead restore the original uniformity and universality of the soul. The ultimate aim of such spiritual aspirants is to merge their individual self with the universal Self known as the supreme transcendental Brahm in the language of the Upanishads. Since the type of Yoga described in this Upanishad does not entail any hardships for the practitioner as is usually the case with other forms of Yoga involving arduous and most difficult exercises involving various stern Asanas, Mudras and Bandhas, it becomes a relatively easier option to achieve the same goal as the latter. It basically involves the training of the mind to gradually remove itself from its involvement with the material and artificial world and instead turn inwards to see the reality of the pure consciousness hidden in one's own bosom. It inspires the mind and intellect to become concentrated and devote its energy and potentials in acquiring the truthful knowledge about one's self and the reality of existence as propounded and enunciated in the scriptures by studying them deeply under proper guidance of a wise and experienced teacher. This learning should then be implemented in one's daily life and become a part of one's routine personality instead of just remaining a perfunctory knowledge acquired to gain popularity, money and fame.

The first stage described in verse nos. 4-9 of this Upanishad is the preliminary stage when one is acquainted with the necessary eligibility requirements of this Yoga. Once the aspirant is ready, he is initiated into the second stage when he is expected to take the shelter of a learned teacher and guide who would kind of hold his hand and become his mentor. It also narrates the benefits that the aspirant gets, such as his ability to distinguish between the right and the wrong.

It is the mind that is at the center of all thought processes. It is the mind that creates this world because first it becomes 'aware' of it, then gets 'attracted' by its charms, and finally gets 'hooked' to it so much so that it starts hallucinating and imagining things that actually do not exist. But when the aspirant has been successful in training his mind by doing meditation, thereby stopping it from paying any attention to this world, the efforts of the mind can then be diverted to nobler pursuits. Since the mind has a natural tendency to remain in a perpetual state of flux, without resting for a moment, it is imperative for any spiritual aspirant to divert it to some constructive work because if it is left to its own device and remains unattended, it would automatically swerve towards the world and its artificial but most alluring charms. Meditation and contemplation techniques are meant for focusing the mind towards the inner self instead of the outside world. Once the mind turns inwards, the outside world ceases to exist as far as the individual is concerned, and all the disturbances that arise from the latter would naturally be eliminated. The result would be a sense of profound serenity and calmness that would surround the aspirant like

an all-enveloping veil of peace and contentedness, because all his worldly desires and wants, all his passions and yearnings, all the causes for his getting attracted towards the world and getting hooked to its charms would lose their meaning, importance and essence.

The purpose of Yoga is to bring about a harmony between apparently separate units of creation which often work at odds with each other though they are fundamentally different aspects of the same thing. When the aspirant is able to understand the basic principle that the same Atma prevails uniformly in this creation in all the living beings, when he understands that all forms of deeds are actually done by the gross body and not the Atma, that it is the mind that is the creator of all sorts of attachments and distresses pertaining to this world which is however artificial and delusory like the mirage seen in the hot desert, he would develop a profound sense of indifference and equanimity. He would deem to have controlled his mind, because it is the mind that is at the root of all thinking processes and imaginations, it is the mind that weaves its own cobweb and gets entangled in its own creation.

²Since you have risen to a higher level of wisdom and enlightenment, since you have realised what the ‘truth’ is and confident of yourself in this matter, it is expected of you that mundane matters and artificial things of this delusory world that normally act like a quagmire for ordinary persons or an entangling cobweb for them would not have the strength to delude you and trap you in their ever-expanding vicious tentacles, pulling you down back in the bog from which you have already extricated yourself after great effort by inculcating spiritual virtues, by acquiring the great knowledge about the Atma, and becoming aware of the ultimate goal of life as preached in the tenets of metaphysics and spiritualism. You should be vigilant from falling or slipping back into the deep and dark pit of ignorance, or getting enticed by the deceptive sweet charms of this falsehood once you have managed to extricate yourself from their tight embrace. You must be wary of the evil design of this cunning monster that would first entice you with tall promises, and once you get close enough he would devour you. You must ensure that whatever progress you have already made is not nullified by any single misstep on your part, whether advertently or inadvertently for you might not get a second chance at rectification.]”

(17) Saalamba Yoga and Niraalmaba Yoga—

These two forms of Yoga have been elaborately described in the Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 8, paragraph nos. 8-10 as follows—

“Canto 8, paragraph no. 8 = After hearing the above discourse, the disciple asked the teacher—‘Oh Lord! What are ‘Saalamba’ and ‘Niraalamba’ Yogas?’ (8).

[Note—The word Aalamba means to take support of, to rely on, a prop, a stay, a reason, a dependence upon something, an object which helps to support some other object.

The word Yoga means to bring about a union or to establish uniformity between two separate entities. In the context of the spiritual aspirant’s desire to find Mukti by worshipping his chosen deity, Yoga would mean an instrument or exercise that helps him to obtain his cherished aim or goal of obtaining access to or obtaining nearness with the deity he adores and worships. Since the deity worshipped in this Upanishad is Adi-Narayan or Maha Vishnu representing the supreme Brahm, the particular effort or path followed to reach this deity would be by the aspirant’s Yoga.

Hence, Saalamba Yoga is defined in paragraph no. 9, and Niraalamba Yoga in paragraph no. 10-12.]

“Canto 8, paragraph no. 9 = ‘Saalamba Yoga is that in which the spiritual aspirant focuses his attention or meditates upon (i.e. takes the help of) an image of the worshipped deity to reach his spiritual destination while remaining aloof from all humdrum activities of the gross world which might be a cause of any kind of distraction or diversion for him.

This image of the chosen deity has a certain form, such as the one which has a holy feet and a certain countenance.

So, an aspirant who chooses this path towards his spiritual destination meditates upon an image of the deity he worships and focuses his attention on its holy feet or its divine halo and general countenance. [That is, he takes the help of an image to reach his destination of being close to the Lord he worships. This image is just an ‘image’ of the principal Lord, and not the Lord himself. It just helps the aspirant to concentrate his faculties on the Divinity he worships; it is like a prop that helps him to stand up and walk up to his desired goal in life, but not the goal itself! This method has been devised by the scriptures to make something that is very enigmatic, mysterious and esoteric to come within reach of and become accessible to an ordinary aspirant.] (9).

“Canto 8, paragraph no. 10 = Niraalmaba Yoga is that when the spiritual aspirant becomes completely neutral and disassociates himself from all things physical and gross by their nature. Hence, he discards with a large barge-pole all such formal processes of reaching his spiritual destination such as worshipping a deity or its image having a name and form by adopting certain formal forms of activities that are ritualistic, obligatory and mechanical in nature.

He even pays no attention to the natural inclinations of his Anthakaran (i.e. his mind, intellect, sub-conscious and ego) that may advise him to the contrary. [For instance, his mind may suggest to him to worship this and that, to go here and there on a pilgrimage, to do this or that deed that can be spiritually beneficial for him, and so on simply because so many people are doing it from traditional times and therefore logically there must be some benefit in doing so or there must be some truth in it. Then his ego might compel him to do some specified deeds such as holding large religious ceremonies to establish himself as a religious man in society. But a truly wise and enlightened man is he who just smiles and looks the other way, so to say. He neglects all such prodding of his Antahakran, his inner voice, and steadfastly follows the path he has fixed for himself. The point to note here is that the importance of doing proper research in order to choose the correct path is not to be underestimated or undermined by wrongly interpreting this edict of the Upanishad. What is intended here is that once the path is selected after due diligence, one must then stick to it without being uncertain of it or its benefits or where it would lead him. It is this single-minded pursuit of the desired goal that can help the spiritual aspirant to find Mukti or liberation and deliverance from this ocean-like world in the limited time of one life-span he has to his disposal.]

This is called ‘Niraalamba Yoga’—or the effort made to reach the spiritual destination without taking any help from any external medium (10).”

(18) Yoga with its various limbs, or branches—

Now let us look into the concept of Yoga in the context of it having a number of ‘limbs or branches’. We shall endeavour to present a comprehensive picture of Yoga and the different terms used to describe its various components as dealt with them in the various Upanishads.

(18) (a) The 8 *limbs* or paths or branches of Yoga—The chief exponent of Yoga was sage Patanjali, and he had crystallized the principles of Yoga in his Yog Sutra which contains 185 Sutras or formulas or keys for doing Yoga. Yoga is one of the 6 schools of Indian Hindu Philosophy. We shall now briefly see the essential elements of Patanjali’s Yog Sutra.

Patanjali is considered the grandfather of Yoga. Here we shall see in brief his basic ideas of Yoga, and we would observe that they are more philosophical in their content, import and application than the mere physical exercise involved in doing routine Yoga (meditation). Patanjali’s philosophies on Yoga are universally applicable to all the Upanishads, whether they are mere philosophical treatises or the ones dealing with only meditation exercises in detail. In the context of Upanishads on Yoga, let us have a brief glimpse on what sage ‘Patanjali’, has to say on the subject.

‘Patanjali’ has enumerated eight-fold path of Yoga, called Ashtanga Yoga—or the Yoga with 8 limbs or branches. Each phase of his prescription is designed to enable the practitioner to attain the supreme consciousness by quieting the mind and merging it with the truth which is universal, all pervading and infinite.

The eight paths or steps are the following:-

(i) Yam*—broadly meaning self restraint and it covers such virtues as non-violence (Ahinsa), honesty and truthfulness (Stya), abhorring theft (Asteya), abstinence, celibacy and detachment from passions (Brahmacharya), and non-accumulation and non-possession (Aparigraha).

(ii) Niyam*—or observance of principles or codes of conduct in a religious pursuit. Such as having good habits and contentment, observing austerities and penances, self-study of scriptures, following a righteous, virtuous and noble way of life etc.

*According to Skanda Puran, the ‘Yam and Niyam’ mentioned above are ten, and they are the following:—(a) the ten Yams—truthfulness, forgiveness, simplicity, Dhyan (meditation, concentration of the mind), lack of cruelty (or presence of compassion and mercy), forsaking violence, restraint of mind and sense organs, pleasant demeanours and sweet towards all); (b) the ten Niyams—cleanliness/ablution, bath (purification of body), Tapa (austerities, penances, sufferings), alms and charities, keeping silence, Yagya (sacrifices, religious rituals), self study, observance of vows, keeping fasts, celibacy. (Skanda Puran, Bra. Dha. Ma. 5/19-21.)

*The 10 Yams and 10 Niyams—The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 5, verse nos 11-14 lists the ten Yams and ten Niyams. To quote—

“Verse no. 12--13 ½ = The Yam is of ten types. They are the following—Ahinsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-theft), Brahmacharya (self-restraint over the sense organs and observing celibacy and rigid discipline), Daya (mercy and compassion) [12], Kshamaa (forgiveness), Dhriti (to have conviction), Mit Ahaar (eating

with restraint), Shauch (to remain pure and clean, both externally as well as internally), and Cheti (to remain alert and vigilant towards one responsibilities; to be conscientious; to be mindful of the voice of the conscience) [12 ½]. (12-12 ½).

“Verse no. 13-14 = The ten Niyams are the following—Tapa (austerity, penance, sufferance for some noble cause), Santosh (exemplary contentedness and satisfaction), Aastikta (to have faith and belief; to be a believer as opposed to being a heretic, an atheist and non-believer), Daan (charity, donation and alms; magnanimity and broad heartedness that comes with being compassionate, kind and merciful), Ishwar Pooja (worship of the Supreme Being) [13], Siddhanta Srawan (to hear the various principles, tenets or doctrines of the scriptures being taught and discussed by learned people), Lajja (to feel ashamed of doing anything ignoble, unrighteous and inauspicious), Mati (having a correct and fine tuned mind and intellect), Japa (repetition of Mantras and constant remembrance of things learnt so that they are not forgotten), and Vrat (strict adherence to vows and principles of scriptures; fasting and self-control also come under this category because they entail strict determination to observe vows) [14].”

(ii) Aasan—the various postures of the body adopted while doing Yoga or meditation. This is the physical aspect of Yoga. The various postures are designed to free the body from toxins, and they calm down the body as well as the mind which is trained to focus on Brahm or Atma, which is pure and infinite consciousness and a fount of light and enlightenment, instead of wandering aimlessly and getting entangled in a web of miseries and confusions represented by this world. The Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 35-52 describes seventeen Aasans. Other Upanishads that describe the various Aasans are Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 15-17; Yog Kundali, Canto 1, verse nos. 5-6; Mandal Brahmin, Brahmin 1, section 1, verse no. 5, Yog Tattva, verse no. 29; Yog Shikha, Canto 1, verse no. 84; Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 3.

(iv) Pranayam—the control of the life-giving fresh breath or the vital wind force of life called Pran. It helps remove distractions and agitations of the mind, removes the various toxins present in the blood, opens up clogged veins and arteries, relaxes the nerves, and ultimately helps to elevate both the body and the mind. It activates and re-energises the battery of the body. The importance of Pranayam in Yoga can never be fully emphasised because it is the main tool of Yoga. The entire Canto 5-6 of Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Sam Veda is devoted to this theme. Some of the Upanishads which describe it in detail are Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 21-22, 56-76; Dhyani Bindu; Yoga Kundali; Yoga Tattva; Yoga Chudamani; Trishikhi Brahmin; Jabal Darshan, Canto 5-6; Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 5, verse nos. 3-4, Canto 1, section 6, and Canto 1, section 7, verse no. 2.

Patron Gods of Pranayam—The Dhyani Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 21 says that the three phases of Pranayam have three patron Gods. That is, the Purak phase (in which breath is inhaled) has Brahma the creator as the patron God; the Kumbhak phase (in which breath is held inside the body) has Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation as the patron God; and the Rechak phase (in which the breath is exhaled) the patron God is Shiva or Rudra.

The period or duration for which Pranayam should be done have been enumerated in Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 5, verse nos. 3-4; Canto 1, section 7, verse no. 2.

(v) Pratyahar—this is the state of withdrawal of the mind from agitations caused by the stimuli-inputs reaching it from the five sensory organs of perception of the body, which act like radars collecting various information from the outside world. With the lack of inputs, i.e. the radar going blank, the mind does not have to bother itself about the output, which is the control of the organs of action. Hence, it finds time and energy to relax and contemplate and ponder upon other more important matters of life such as the spiritual and ethereal rather than spending its energy in the humdrum, routine work of the world. The entire Canto 7 of Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Sam Veda is devoted to this theme.

The 5 types of Pratyahars—The *Shandilya Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 8, verse nos. 1-2 describe the five types of Pratyahars as follows—

“Verse no. 1 = Generally speaking, Pratyahar is to exercise restraint on the sense organs of the gross body by preventing them from naturally moving outwards towards their respective sense objects in the external world and remaining indulgent or engrossed in them, and instead, consciously and with diligent effort, striving to turn them inwards towards one’s inner-self by being meditative and contemplative.

In order to make this happen, the aspirant should understand and inculcate the wisdom that whatever is seen is nothing but the Atma or pure consciousness, and that if anything lacks the Atma then it is not the truth. The awareness that whatever is perceived in the external world by the organs of perception in the body is due to the presence of Atma or consciousness or ‘life’ in these organs, and that this world exists only as long as there is Atma in it (i.e. as long as there is life in the body as well as the world in which it lives) is known as Pratyahar.

Not to be interested in and bothered or concerned about the results of the deeds done daily by the aspirant is known as Pratyahar. [In other words, one is observing Pratyahar if he is not worried about the rewards or punishments of the deeds that he does as a matter of his duty. He should do deeds in this world without expecting any fruits from them. This is doing deeds with exemplary detachment and dispassion. Since all deeds are done by the gross organs of the body, being detached from the deeds, or not being mentally involved in them, is equivalent to having restrained the organs from involvement with the external world of sense objects because these organs would not expect any self-gratification or deriving any personal gain as a reward of doing these deeds. Neither would the organs shun doing any deed for the fear of punishment. The net effect would be that the man would do all his duties with the greatest neutrality and in an un-biased way. He would be more interested in doing his duties diligently and to the best of his might and abilities so that the thing done is perfect as far as possible rather than having half his attention fixed on their results, and getting nervous and distracted as a consequence.]

To be completely free from all sorts of Vasanas (passions, lust, desires, aspirations and yearnings) regarding the various material sense objects of this mundane world is also called Pratyahar. [Vasanas are generated when the sense organs find the world succulent and juicy. When the man trains himself to become dispassionate and detached from all temptations and enchantments of this deluding and entrapping world, it is natural that the organs lose interest in the world. It is the mind that directs the organs of the body to do anything, and when the mind has decided that it is worthless to pursue this material world, and that no permanent peace, bliss and happiness is ever possible in this

world and its material sense objects, it would direct the organs to keep themselves away from all involvement with this world.]

To focus the mind and its sub-conscious in the eighteen subtle places of the body so that the energy and dynamism inherent in the living being are directed to nobler causes of the spirit instead of frittering them away in pursuing this illusive and demeaning gross world is also known as Pratyahar. [The eighteen subtle points are listed in verse no. 2 below. This edict is an extension of the first one that ordains restricting the sense organs of the body from moving outwards towards the gross world of material sense objects, and instead turning those organs inwards and directing their efforts to aid the aspirant in his spiritual practices such as meditation and contemplation.] (1).

“verse no. 2 = The eighteen points where the mind should be focused and consciousness visualized to be pulsating during meditation are the following—the big toe of the foot, the ankle, the calf, the knee, the thigh, the anus, the genital, the navel, the heart, the pit of the throat, the palate in the mouth, the nostril, the eye, the center of the eyebrows, the forehead, and the top of the head.

One must concentrate on all these points of the body and experience the pulsations of life-consciousness in them.”

(vi) Dharna—it means training of the mind to focus on one point; it is concentration of the mind as opposed to its constant state of being in a flux, always volatile and restless. It helps sharpen the intellect and empowers it with tremendous potentials like the rays of laser —precise, incisive, sharp, powerful, effective and surgical in nature. It also refers to firm conviction, belief and faith in the chosen path. The entire Canto 8 of Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Sam Veda is devoted to this theme.

The 3 types of Dharnas—The *Shandilya Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 9, verse nos. 1-2 describe the three types of Dharnas as follows—“ the concept of ‘Dharna’ is being narrated. It is of three types as follows--

To focus one’s Mana (thinking mind and emotional heart) on the Atma or the pure consciousness that is the true inner-self of the aspirant, and to be unwaveringly firm in this belief that the Atma is one’s true self, is called the first type of Dharna.

To have a firm belief and be convinced that the subtle space of the heart, called the ‘Hridaya Akash’, is the same as the eternal, vast, infinite and fathomless sky present outside the body, called the ‘Bahaya-kash’, is the second type of Dharna.

That the five principal elements of creation, viz. the earth, the water, the fire, the air and the sky which, though subtle in themselves, are the ones that have revealed themselves in the gross form of all that exists in this creation. In other words, to be able to have a firm belief that all that is visible in this gross world are nothing else but the same five subtle elements of creation appearing in these myriad and varied forms is called Dharna. Hence, Dharna is to have a firm conviction that all that is visible in this world are actually images of these five primary elements of creation that have assumed different forms. [By extension, Dharna is to have a firm belief that all life and all creatures that exist in this world are nothing but the same cosmic Consciousness called the Atma that is revealed in each of their forms.] (1).”

(vii) Dhyān—uninterrupted contemplation and meditation without an object used as a medium to concentrate the mind. The intention here is to heighten awareness of the pure-self and to establish oneness with the macro-soul of the cosmos. It results in the achievement of calmness, peace and tranquility. The practical benefit in life is the calmness and serenity achieved by a seeker/aspirant during the process of Dhyān, and this calmness and tranquility spills over into all other aspects of life, thereby strengthening the emotional, intellectual and spiritual fabric of the creature. The entire Canto 9 of *Jabal Darshan Upanishad* of Sam Veda is devoted to this theme.

The 2 types of Dhyāns—The *Shandilya Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 10 describes the two types of Dhyāns as follows—“It is of two types as follows—The first is called ‘Saguna Dhyān’ and the second is called ‘Nirguna Dhyān’.

‘Saguna Dhyān’ is to think about, contemplate upon and remember something as having a physical form with specific features; it is to think of the divine Being in the form of an image having gross physical features and characteristic attributes.

‘Nirguna Dhyān’ is to think of and contemplate upon the same sublime divinity in its subtle form that is invisible and is known as the Atma or pure consciousness. This Atma is in the form of an ethereal spirit that has no grossness, physical features or characteristic attributes to define it (1).”

(viii) Samādhi—it is the final step and final stage of meditation, and it is a trance-like state of existence wherein the creature remains virtually awake in this world, but on a subtle plane he remains totally oblivious of the existence of the surrounding gross world. This Samādhi leads to bliss and happiness. In this state, the seeker/aspirant merges himself with the supreme Self, which is the real Truth and absolute Reality. Such people become truly enlightened souls who have developed union with their parent, the Brahm. The entire Canto 10 of *Jabal Darshan Upanishad* of Sam Veda is devoted to this theme. Refer also to *Shandilya Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 11.

All these limbs of Yoga work together in unison. The 1st five steps are mainly concerned with tuning the body and mind leading to its focus on the truth in the 6th and the 7th steps. The integration of the body, mind and soul into one spiritual whole, and removing of the barrier between the microcosmic Atma/soul of the individual and the macrocosmic Atma/soul of the cosmos is achieved, resulting in ultimate felicity and beatitude of the 8th step.

The eight-fold path of Yoga have been listed in *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 11—11 ½ and *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 24-25 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, as well as in *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 28-34, and *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 3-10 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

The first five steps of Yoga, i.e. Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam and Pratyahara are considered external processes or ‘Bahiranga Yoga’, while the last three, i.e. Dharna, Dhyān and Samādhi are called the internal processes or ‘Antaranga Yoga’. Patanjali says in his 12th maxim of the first chapter of Yog Sutra that success in Yoga can be achieved by a coordination of practice and detachment. While ‘practice’ obviously implies the observation of rules and steps of Yoga as defined in Yoga treatises, ‘detachment’ means the consciousness that has given up desires for objects either seen of or heard of. This detachment should be comprehensive in the sense that the practitioner of Yoga should

also be indifferent towards the three Gunas or qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama that dominate all behavioral patterns in this world.

These eight steps of Yoga designed by Patanjali are meant to guide the spiritual aspirant gradually and in a systematic manner to progress higher in his spiritual endeavours and ultimately achieve the supreme state of eternal blissfulness that comes with inner awakening and experiencing the divine source of light and enlightenment that resides in one's own bosom.

The first two steps, i.e. Yam¹ or abstentions, and Niyam² or observances, result in calmness of body and mind which are essentials in success in any enterprise. This preliminary moral training provides the aspirant with the solid ground which helps avoid future digressions from the main path of Yoga. The third step, i.e. Aasan or various sitting postures, helps one to exercise control over the physical body. The fourth step, i.e. Pranayam or breath control, helps to harness the stupendous energy of the different vital winds present inside the body and divert their inherent powers for the spiritual as well as physical benefit of the aspirant's mind-body complex. The fourth step, i.e. Pratyahar or control over the sense organs, helps him to detach himself from the external objects of this distracting world and focus all his attention inwards. These first five steps of Yoga, i.e. Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam and Pratyahara are considered external processes or 'Bahiranga Yoga'.

Next comes the internal processes or 'Antaranga Yoga' which consists of the last three steps. Thus, sixth step, i.e. Dharna or fixed attention, helps to rivet or fasten the mind to one object which is the aim of Yoga. Constant practice of this sixth step called Dharna leads to the seventh step called Dhyan or continuous meditation and contemplation, without any break. The culmination of all these seven steps is the last stage or the eighth step called Samadhi or the trance-like transcendental state of deep absorption of the mind. The difference between Dharna and Dhyan is that the former is a temporary fixation of the mind while the latter is a higher state of fixation of concentration of the mind where it is not disturbed by any other thoughts. To draw an analogy to explain the relation between Dharna and Dhyan we may cite the instance of water and oil or any other viscous fluid such as honey or jelly. Drops of water dripping from a tap are like Dharna, while the continuous and interrupted flow of oil is like Dhyan.

Patanjali has defined Samadhi as the eclectic and mystical state of the mind when it is full of the revelation of the object concentrated upon, a state in which the aspirant loses awareness of all external as well as internal existence. He even forgets about himself.

It should be noted here that the second last step (Dhyan) which leads to Samadhi is a 'reflective knowledge', i.e. it consists of three elements of knowledge. These are—the 'Dhyata' or the awareness of the person who concentrates, the 'Dhyan' or the process of concentrating, and 'Dhyeya' or the object concentrated or meditated upon. It is like saying 'I am meditating on such and such object'. When these distinctions are removed, then it is the state of Samadhi.

The main thrust of Yoga is not mere arrest of the mind or mere physical exercises, but train the aspirant to realise his true self and its divine nature by rigorously following certain well defined and tested techniques.

(18) (b) The 6 limbs or branches or paths of Yoga—According to *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad*, verse no. 41 belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the six limbs of Yoga are the following—Aasan (sitting posture), Pranayam (breath control), Pratyahar (withdrawal of the mind and its control), Dharna (having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path), Dhyan (contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect), and Samadhi (a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation).

According to *Amrit Naad Upanishad*, verse no. 6, of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, there are six paths called the limbs or branches of Yoga. They are the following—Pratyahar, Dhyan, Pranayam, Dharna, Tarka (logic and rationality), and Samadhi. The six paths of Yoga or meditation and contemplation which enables one to realise the true nature of the pure consciousness residing in one's own bosom as the Atma, which is the 'true self' of the aspirant, and establish oneness with this Atma and the supreme Atma of the creation known as Brahm, are the following--(1) Pratyahar or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (2) Dhyan or contemplation and deep concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect; (3) Pranayam which means control of the vital winds in the body, called the subtle Prans, by the means of different meditation techniques and harnessing their latent energy and potentials to acquire stupendous mystical powers which enables the aspirant to reach higher state of consciousness which is not otherwise possible in the normal course; (4) Dharna or having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; (5) Tarka or application of logic and analytical abilities of the mind to reach rational conclusions that are empirical and can stand the rigorous tests of rationality and truth, lending them credibility and value; and (6) Samadhi or a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation; or a state when all falsehoods are eliminated and what remains is an unwavering and steady light of realisation of the Truth.

Refer also to *Yogchudamani Upanishad* of Sam Veda which also describes the six-fold path of Yoga.

(18) (c) The 4 limbs or branches or paths of Yoga—It is pertinent to note here that the main thrust of Yoga is to establish a union between the conscious Atma of an individual and the conscious Atma of the cosmos. There are other schools of philosophy for this 'conscious realisation'. The word Yoga generally refers to the practice and philosophy of meditation and contemplation; also psychic philosophy because it directly affects the mind and its functions and behaviour. Yoga means to establish a union or to bring together. Therefore, it establishes a union between the individual creature and the Supreme Being manifested as the universal Atma of this creation. In other words, it unifies the manifested form of the universal Consciousness in the form of the creature with the primary form of this creature known as the Atma. This is called 'self realisation'.

There are two views on this subject as follows:--

(1) According to one school of thought, the four types of Yoga are the following—(a) Mantra Yoga; (b) Laya Yoga; (c) Hath Yoga; and (d) Raaj Yoga. These have been described in serial nos. 10, 12, 13 and 7 above respectively.

According to the second school of thought, the four paths of Yoga involve four spiritual practices—(a) ‘Karma’ which implies doing righteous deeds and taking appropriate actions as a means of spiritual progress; (b) ‘Bhakti’ meaning devotion and faith on a chosen deity who represents the ideals of the follower; (c) ‘Gyan’ which is the use of the mind and intellect to reach the ultimate, irrefutable truth; and (d) ‘Raaj’ which is the psycho spiritual practice of exercises and breath control.

Now let us first see what the different Upanishads say on this subject according to the first school of thinking (i.e. Mantra, Laya, Hath and Raaj).

The *Yoga Tattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 19, says about these four paths of Yoga. To quote—

“Verse no. 19 = From the practical point of view, Yoga has is said to have many branches¹, or it appears to possess many forms. [In other words, though Yoga is one composite science of spiritualism and its main purpose is to bring about a union or harmony between two units of the one single whole by removing imaginary disparities and false dichotomies between them which make them appear to be separate from one another, in order to facilitate understand of its finer nuances and comprehend it in its entirety it is broken up into smaller branches or sections or schools of thoughts and practice, giving the wrong impression that Yoga has so many forms or types. All this creates artificial distinctions between them. Resultantly, their main purpose is lost in futile debates, numerous paths and theories, and almost colliding philosophies.]

Some of the various types or branches of Yoga are the following—Mantra Yoga¹, Laya Yoga², Hath Yoga³ and Raaj Yoga⁴ (19).

[Note--¹*Mantra Yoga* refers to practicing Yoga through Mantra. It is that Yoga in which constant repetition of Mantras steadies the mind. The Mantra of the chosen deity is used as the standard common denominator and as medium to focus the mind and attention while practicing the eight-fold path of Yoga as prescribed by Patanjali, the greatest exponent of Yoga philosophy. This Yoga is called Astaanga Yoga, the Yoga with eight branches or organs.

According to Vaayaviya Sanhita, which is an important work on Shaivism, there are five kinds of Yoga, and Mantra Yoga is the first amongst them. As stated above, it is that Yoga in which constant repetition of Mantras steadies the mind. When this is associated with Pranayam or breath control, it is called ‘Sparsha Yoga’. This develops into a higher state called ‘Bhaava Yoga’ when the repetition of Mantra stops automatically and involuntarily, leaving only the feeling of tender devotion and spiritual ecstasy in its wake inspite on one living in this world. When one rises higher in this practice, the world completely disappears and there is no feeling whatsoever, a sort of ‘neutrality’ or ‘zero’ effect is obtained. This is called ‘Abhaava Yoga’. At the last stage of spiritual evolution, the union with Shiva, the ultimate Truth and the embodiment of Yoga, is obtained. This state or stage is called ‘Maha Yoga’.

²Technically, the *Laya Yoga* has two meanings. One with a purely metaphysical dimension is the dissolution of the Chitta or mind and its various faculties so much so that the practitioner remembers the supreme Lord even while going about his daily life and its chores simply because his mind is completely dissolved in the remembrance of the Supreme Being and it is the physical gross body that does the various deeds associated with the world, resulting in the person remaining absolutely oblivious of what he has done or whatever is happening around him. This has been asserted in verse no. 23 of this Upanishad.

According to another interpretation based on Patanjali’s Yogsutra, it is called ‘Kundalini Yoga’. This is the physical aspect of Yoga by which various techniques are

employed to kindle the latent energy lying dormant in the coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine, called the Kundalini, and spiritual involvement is attained. This method has been described in detail all major Upanishads detailing the eight steps of physical Yoga.

³*Hath Yoga* is the Yoga that teaches how to bring about the union of Pran (the breath, the vital wind that resides in the upper part of the body) and the Apaan (the wind that moves down in the body and helps in digestion and excretion, the vital wind that lives in the lower part of the body) by means of strict following of the eight fold path of Yoga such as observance of Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna, concentration and visualization of the presence of the Supreme Being in the point of the forehead where the root of the nose meets the middle of the eyebrows, and Samadhi. These have been enumerated in verse no. 24-25 below. It teaches the practical aspects of spiritual Yoga.

⁴*Raaj Yoga*—Hath and Raaj Yogas are the two sides of the same coin. Neither is possible without the help of the other. The Raaj Yoga which deals primarily with the control of the mind ultimately leading to the state of Samadhi is the primary form of the two, and Hath Yoga is merely an instrument to aid it. Thus we see that the Yoga propounded by Patanjali is the one which is known as Raaj Yoga because it fulfills the objective and definition of Raaj Yoga.]”

The *Yoga Tattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 20-22 says that there are four main stages or states of Yoga. To quote—

“Verse no. 20 = Yoga has been classified universally as having four main stages or states—Aarambha¹, Ghat², Parichaya³ and Nishpati⁴ (20).

[Note—¹The word *Aarambha* means to begin, the initial phases of Yoga. This refers to the preparatory stage of Yoga.

²The word *Ghat* means a pitcher. Hence this refers to the stage when the vital winds are held inside the body and allowed to mix with each other. See verse nos. 65-66 below.

³The word *Parichaya* means introduction, and it refers to the sudden realisation by the practitioner of Yoga about his own stupendous potentials and his own pure consciousness about which he was hitherto oblivious. The ascetic is literally introduced to his own self. What he had known about himself previously was a distorted version of his true self, but Yoga has introduced him to his real and true conscious and powerful almighty self.

⁴Finally, the word *Nishpati* refers to the completion of Yoga with a definitive degree of certainty. The ascetic is not in any doubt about what he has learnt and experienced. Thus, he would remain steady and unfaltering in his state of self-realisation.]

“Verse no. 21-22 = The signs of these four stages or phases of Yoga (as described in verse no. 19) are being mentioned briefly now. An aspirant who practices Japa (repetition) of a Mantra¹, complete with all its components such as Matrikaa² etc., for a continuous period of twelve years is able to acquire knowledge of the various mystical powers and divine potentials known as Siddhis such as Anima³ etc.

But this type of Yoga is done by people of low category whose intellectual development and spiritual aspirations is not of the higher level that is to be expected from true spiritual aspirants. Therefore, they are treated as the lowliest class of spiritual aspirants⁴ (21-22).

[Note—¹*Mantra* is a group of mystical letters or syllables or words or phrases that are used as an aid to concentrate and steady the mind and focus one’s energy towards the successful completion of the process of Yoga. It is the sound symbol embodying the

form, the power and the consciousness of the supreme Brahm or its various manifestations as the deities worshipped.

²*Mantrika* is the part of the Mantra dedicated to Mother Goddess symbolising the esoteric and powerful forces of Nature. It is useful in igniting and activating the latent subtle energy trapped inside the Kundalini, the coiled energy center at the base of the spine.

³The *Siddhis* are eight in number and are the mystical powers that come as a natural boon to the ascetic as part of his spiritual elevation. They give him super human powers and help him to accomplish astounding feats. Briefly these eight Siddhis are the following— (i) ‘Anima’ means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) ‘Mahima’ is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one’s achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) ‘Garima’ is to have weight, stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) ‘Laghima’ is to have simplicity and humility; (v) ‘Praapti’ is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) ‘Prakramya’ is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) ‘Ishwatwa’ is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) ‘Vashitwa’ is to be able to control and subdue others.

⁴This is because Mantras and Yoga should not be used to acquire powers that give worldly fame and wealth which usually come naturally to those people who have certain super-natural occult powers. People flock to them from far and near seeking their blessings for their worldly problems and then donate huge largesse to them if their wishes are fulfilled. This should not be the aim of either the use of Mantra or of Yoga. Their main target should be self-purification, self-enlightenment and the realisation of the truth about the world, about one’s own self and the consciousness residing in one’s bosom. It should be aimed at providing a gateway to spiritual liberation and deliverance rather than assembling a crowd of followers and blessing seekers, for in the latter case the ascetic would be tied down to this world instead of finding freedom from it. The delusions that accompany all worldly praises and honours, the hallucination that all worldly charms, pomp and pelf cause are very overpowering. That is why if a spiritual aspirant employs Mantra and Yoga to successfully acquire the Siddhis and thinks that he had done a great job by harnessing the potentials of Yoga and Mantra by the dint of his hard practice and sacrifice, then he is a man of a low intellect and wisdom.]”

The *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 129 states that when an ascetic is successful in doing Raaj Yoga, he need not worry about doing Hath Yoga any longer. This is because Raaj Yoga entails total control of the mind and intellect. Once this objective is achieved, i.e. once the restlessness of the body and its wayward sense organs are brought under control, there is apparently no necessity for making special efforts to control them. These have been the cause of so much distress, restlessness and discomfort for the mind, and thorough it for the Atma of the creature. Once the mind is controlled, the body would automatically be controlled. The Raaj Yoga, which deals primarily with the control of the mind, ultimately leads to the state of Samadhi.

The *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 138 states that an ascetic who is successful in Raaj Yoga is able to obtain all the Siddhis such as Anima etc.

(18) (d) The 3 limbs of Yoga—According to the *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse no. 10, there are three main types of Yoga but they are

successful only when done in coordination with the eight components of Yoga called the 'Ashtaang Yoga'. To quote—"The various aspects or types of Yoga practices, such as Mantra, Laya and Hath Yoga, should be done gradually, starting on a soft note and progressing slowly to the medium level and finally reaching the high level of Yoga.

These three types of Yoga, viz. Mantra, Laya and Hath, are successful only when coordinated with the eight fold path of Yoga known as 'Ashtaang Yoga' (10)."

The *Yog Kundalini Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse no. 2 asserts that there are three paths or steps in Yoga. These three paths are (a) Pranayam (breath control), (b) Aasan and Bandha (sitting postures and closing of the various apertures of the body), and (c) Shakti Chaalan (activating the subtle energy centers in the body, such as the activation of the Kundalini, and making them upwardly mobile along with the vital winds of the body, especially the Apan wind). It then goes on to describe these terms in detail.

The *Annapurna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 4, verse no. 87 describes the three main limbs of Yoga as Pranayam (control of vital winds), Aasan (sitting postures), and Asan (dietary control). It says—"The movement of the Pran (vital winds) inside the body can be controlled or regulated by practicing Pranayam (breath control), doing various Aasans (sitting postures), and observing Ashan (fasting; moderation in eating), along with establishing a coordination between them as advised by a learned Guru (teacher). [That is, in order to regulate the movement of Pran it is important to practice all the aforesaid three principles of Yoga simultaneously. They act like the three legs of the tripod which support the aspirant's efforts to control the Pran and achieve success in his spiritual endeavours. Even if one leg is short or deformed, the tripod would be unsteady and face the risk of toppling over. Similarly, if one any of the three tenets are not properly followed, the aspirant cannot hope for reaching the desired goal of self-realisation.] (87)."

(a) *Pranayam* has three stages of Rechak (exhalation), Purak (inhalation) and Kumbhak (holding of the air inside the body)—*Yog Kundalini Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 19-55.

Types of Kumbhaks—According to the *Yog Kundalini Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 21-39 there are *four types of Kumbhaks*—viz. Surya Bhedan, Ujjaayi, Shitali and Bhastrika.

According to the *Shandilya Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 7, verse no. 13/5, there are *two types of Kumbhaks* called 'Sakal' and 'Keval'. To quote—"Verse no. 13/5 = the two aspects of Kumbhak are being described. Kumbhak is of two types—(i) Sahit (inclusive; in association with another entity), and (ii) Keval (exclusive; standing alone).

The 'Sahit Kumbhak' is one that is linked with the other two phases of Pranayam, viz. Purak (inhalation) and Rechak (exhalation). In other words, the Sahit Kumbhak is one that is flanked by Purak and Rechak; it is in between these two phases of Pranayam. It does not persist for any length of time as it has to give way to Rechak. And it also depends upon the Purak for drawing in air for the purpose of filling the body.

On the other hand, the 'Keval Kumbhak' is a stand-alone process that is independent of the other two steps of Pranayam. [That is, the wind is allowed to remain inside the body and circulate in it for protracted periods and for as long a duration as the

ascetic wants it to remain inside the body. He does not feel the need to exhale or inhale. The Kumbhak of this sort may extend for many hours or even days together when the body is in a state of suspended animation. Since breathing is stopped, an ascetic who is skilled in Keval Kumbhak might be buried in the ground for long periods but he would not die, for when he comes out of the ground he would be able to revive his sense organs and resume all the external activities of the body by resuming breathing.]

Till the time one becomes an expert in doing Keval Kumbhak he must regularly and diligently practice the Sahit form of Kumbhak. Once the ascetic is able to master the art of Keval Kumbhak, there is nothing that is not accessible to him in all the three worlds (i.e. in the terrestrial world, in the heavens and in the nether world), or there is no mystical power that is not within his reach.

The Kumbhak is so powerful and effective that it is alone capable of activating the Kundalini¹ (13/5).

[Note—¹The Kundalini is the coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine. Under ordinary situation it blocks the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi, thus preventing the vital winds called Pran from freely rising up this Naadi and reaching the upper reaches of the head where the ascetic is able to experience the bliss of Brahm-realisation. In more practical terms, since this Naadi is the main nerve passing through the spinal cord, its blocking impedes the free circulation of vital impulses from the various organs of the body to the brain and back to those organs. Naturally, this hinders the proper functioning of the body and creates a sort of log-jam. It is just like the case of the main ventilation duct of a house being clogged by soot or other impurities which has a negative effect on the freshness of the air inside the entire house.

The Kumbhak phase, when done systematically and for a prolonged period of time, helps to heat the wind trapped inside the body and build up pressure. The result is that the Kundalini is jerked and vibrated sufficiently enough to prod it into life. It straightens and opens the mouth of the Sushumna Naadi so as to allow the subtle energy of the Kundalini to enter it along with the heated Apaana and other winds which push it from below. This energy and winds then travel upwards towards the head, and on the way they rupture or open other Chakras or energy centers of the body. The cumulative affect is that all the hitherto closed energy centers of the body are opened and a huge burst of subtle energy that was dormant and latent is now released. The result is obvious to imagine—the practitioner experiences renewed vigour and vitality surging through his veins and nerves.]”

(b) There are two main *Aasans* such as Padmasana and Vajrasana—verse nos. 5-6. There are three *Bandhas* such as Mool Bandha—verse no. 42-46, 64, Uddiyan Bandha—verse no. 47-50, and Jalandhar Bandha—verse nos. 51-52.

According to the Varaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse nos. 44-45, the three types of Bandhas are the following—Uddiyan Bandha, Mula Bandha, and Sampada Bandha.

(c) The process of *Shakti Chalan* has been described in detail—verse nos. 8-18, 53.

(19) The relationship between *Yoga* (meditation) and *Gyan* (knowledge)—

The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse nos. 12-26, emphasises that *both Yoga as well as Gyan* are needed in a coordinated way in order to enable the spiritual aspirant to achieve success in his spiritual endeavour. It also lays emphasis how Yoga is necessary to control the body and its functioning as well as keeping it fit and toned so as to relieve the mind of the unnecessary nagging by a tormenting body so that it has the time and the energy left that can be diverted to more nobler and auspicious causes which are the prime targets of life. This is one of the few Yoga Upanishads that are revealed in the sense that here the preaching is done by Lord Shiva, the God of death and the third God of the Trinity consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation besides him. Shiva is considered as Yoga personified and is the patron deity for all ascetics; he is the most enlightened and wise of all the Gods and therefore his teaching assumes great metaphysical and spiritual value. The disciple here is Brahma, the creator, who himself must have known the secrets of creation but thought that Shiva was wiser than him on certain matters, so he sought the latter's advise.

Let us see what this Upanishad has to say on this most important subject related to Yoga—

“Verse no. 12 = Therefore it is essential to get rid of these faults and destroy them. Now I shall tell you the ways to do so. Some say that only Gyan (knowledge) is the proper instrument to affect this riddance. But simply Gyan is not sufficient to do so; it cannot alone provide the mystical powers necessary to achieve success in self-realisation and understanding the pure nature of the pure conscious Atma (12).

[Note—Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 14.]

“Verse no. 13 = Gyan devoid of Yoga is also equally incompetent to provide liberation and deliverance from the horrors of the above faults. Similarly, Yoga devoid of Gyan is also equally incompetent to do so. In other words, they have to go hand in hand if the spiritual aspirant is serious about obtaining success in his spiritual venture (13).

[Note—Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 14-15.]

“Verse no. 14 = Hence, those who are sincere about spiritual liberation and deliverance should practice both Yoga and Gyan with equal steadfastness and diligence. [This is because if Gyan can enlighten a person about the Truth, follow up action in the way of practicing what has been learnt from the reading of the scriptures is equally important. Simple knowledge is as useless as mere blind pursuance of any line of action.]

The importance of Gyan in attaining Brahm cannot be underestimated or undermined. The reason is as follows—The attainment of the supreme transcendental Truth that is the aim of any spiritual knowledge is known as Brahm; the latter personifies Truth and knowledge. But the way to such an eclectic and divine holy entity can also be by the path that is knowledge-based and compatible to it. [One cannot hope to reach one's goal by following a wrong path that is not compatible to one's aim. For example, one cannot hope to become a medical man by studying engineering. So if one wishes to become aware of Brahm, one has to follow the correct path that leads to it, and that path

is acquisition of correct knowledge of what or who is Brahm. For, if one does not have the basic knowledge and wisdom, neither would he know what to do and how to reach his goal, nor would he recognise the symptoms of his progress in the correct direction, and whether or not he has obtained success in reaching Brahm.]

Hence, primarily Gyan is the basic path or means to Brahm. It is Gyan which enlightens the spiritual aspirant as to what or who is Brahm, what methods are available to reach it, what are the benefits of following these paths and which is the most suitable for the individual, what rewards await him on attaining or reaching his spiritual destination known as Brahm, etc. (14).

[Note—Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 14-15.]

“Verse no. 15 = A person desirous of Moksha (spiritual liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation) should first understand what is ‘Agyan’ (ignorance and lack of correct knowledge of the reality and truth; the reverse of Gyan). Once one knows what constitutes Agyan, then the latter no longer remains ignorance; it becomes a sort of Gyan (knowledge).

So when the ignorance about one’s true nature is removed, one becomes aware of the pure and supreme nature of the ‘self’ and its most exalted and eclectic stature. It is such a unique entity that it has no match and parallel, hence it is incomparable and unmatched. Therefore it is called ‘Kaivalya Param Pada’, i.e. the only state of existence of the ‘true self’ that is the best and supreme in nature, and is consequentially free from the various faults that have been enumerated above (in verse no. 10-11) (15).

[Note—Verse no. 12-15 can be interpreted in the following manner also. If one is not aware of one’s goal, he would not even attempt to reach it. This is the height of ignorance. When one becomes aware that one is unaware of this knowledge of one’s goal, then this marks the first step towards knowledge, for then one would strive to find out what the goal is. The next step would be to find out the path or way to reach that goal. This is where the role of Gyan comes in—to enlighten one about his true spiritual goal in life and how to reach it. But merely knowledge wouldn’t take one to the goal, for action is needed. This is where Yoga comes into play. The exercises of Yoga and the contemplation and meditation that it incorporates in its ambit are the tools in this spiritual attainment. Yoga means ‘union’, hence it brings about a union between the traveler and the destination; it establishes a link between the spiritual aspirant and his goal of spiritual enlightenment and self-realisation leading to Moksha which is liberation and deliverance of the soul from the endless cycle of birth and death and its attendant horrors, and its final emancipation and salvation. This is the main function of Yoga in the spiritual sphere.

If the Gyan (knowledge) is imperfect, for example if the man chooses the wrong destination or boards the wrong train, the entire exercise proves a nuisance for him; he was better off being ignorant because in both the case he never finds his real goal. This is where proper guidance of the scriptures and their correct and judicious interpretation comes in handy. Since there may be a number of trains to the designated destination and one must choose the most suitable one, this is like selecting the most apt path to reach one’s spiritual goal.

Further, knowledge of one’s destination enables one to recognise it when it is reached. So the knowledge of what or who is Brahm is as important as being aware of its existence. But there are degrees of knowledge—one of the best standards of knowledge would enlighten the spiritual aspirant that that Brahm whom he has embarked to attain is not somewhere in far distant corner of the universe which is beyond his reach, resulting in him feeling frustrated, dismayed and disheartened at its inaccessibility. For true and

high standard of Gyan would tell him that Brahm resides in his own inner self as his pure conscious Atma residing in his subtle heart. So he has just to turn inwards to see and witness Brahm and experience the latter's divine and holy glories.

Thus, Yoga has brought about a meeting place for the ignorant Jiva, i.e. the living being; the worldly creature, and Gyan, i.e. the wise intellect and mind that enables the treasure of knowledge to be unfolded before the creature to remove his darkness of ignorance and its attendant delusions that had been miring him for so long. Yoga helps to forge a relationship between them, leading the creature by the hand on his spiritual journey of discovery.

'You know that you know nothing. Find out that knowledge. This is Mukti (liberation and deliverance from ignorance)'—Ramanna Maharishi.

'I am better off than he (a man reputed for wisdom) is, for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows. I neither know nor think that I know—the truth is, O men of Athens, that God only is wise'—Plato.

'The Yogi (ascetic) whose intellect is perfect contemplates all things abiding in himself and thus, by the eyes of knowledge, he perceives that everything is Atma'—Adi Shankaracharya.

'He who knows and knows he knows, he is a wise man—seek him. He who knows and knows not that he knows, is asleep—wake him. He who knows not and knows that he knows not, he is like a child—teach him. He who knows not and knows not that he knows not—he is stupid and ignorant, shun him'.

'There are things which are 'known knowns', i.e. we know about them; we know we know about them. Then there are things that are 'known unknowns', i.e. we do not know anything about them; there are some things we do not know about. Then there are 'unknown unknowns', i.e. things which are very uncertain and about which we do not know anything; we are ignorant even about their existence'.

Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 16-18.]

“Verse no. 16 = The pure conscious Atma which is the truthful identity of the Jiva (the living being, the creature) is primarily ethereal, pure, untainted and uncorrupt in nature (as opposed to the physical body in which this Atma resides, for the body is impure and corrupt). But this same Atma, under delusions caused by ignorance of its truthful identity and immaculate nature, begins to call itself a Jiva, i.e. a living being or creature which has an external physical gross body that is inherently subjected to numerous faults that are associated with this mortal and material world which is illusionary but appears to be very real.

Consequently, the Atma begins to identify itself as a 'Jiva' that is surrounded by all the faults inherent in this physical gross world marked by imperfections and taints. In other words, being in the wrong company and having a wrong identity, the Atma is now called a 'Jiva' surrounded by such faults as Kaam (worldly passions, lust and yearnings), Krodh (anger, indignation), Bhaye (fears of all sorts) etc. (16).

“Verse no. 17 = Since everything in existence is a manifestation of the same universal Atma which is revealed as the true 'self' of the Jiva, the living being, at the micro level, and as the ubiquitous all-pervading cosmic Soul, called the Parmatma, at the macro level, it follows that Gyan (all forms of knowledge, erudition and wisdom) is also a manifestation of the Atma. This Gyan is therefore wholesome and all-encompassing like its parent body the Atma.

Similarly and for the same reason, even negative traits such as Kaam (worldly passion, lust and desires) and Krodh (anger, indignation, spitefulness and wrath) are also a part of the same 'self' as nothing exists that is not the 'self' in the form of the Atma (18).

“Verse no. 18 = Wholesome Gyan (enlightenment) is that stage when one rises above narrow-minded considerations as to what is acceptable and what is not. In this stage, he becomes full of equanimity and even, treating everything alike and with the same fortitude. [That is, as long as the distinction of one thing being good and the other being bad is there, or till the time the person thinks that this thing is mine and that is yours, or the very notion of 'this and that' and 'me or mine and you or yours' is there, true enlightenment has not been achieved. When all distinctions and differences are erased, when complete equanimity, uniformity and a state of non-duality is obtained, it is then the culmination of true Gyan.]

Such a wise, erudite and highly enlightened man is eternally freed from all the fetters that shackle a creature to this artificial world of delusions and ignorance; he is deemed to have obtained Mukti or liberation and deliverance from all its traps (18).

“Verse no. 19 = Oh the one emerging from the divine Lotus (i.e. Brahma)! This state of eclectic realisation (when all distinctions and sense of duality are removed) is true enlightenment, and it marks the state when the Jiva (creature) has understood his universal, true and wholesome 'self'.

This is the ultimate truth about the true nature of the creature. When he attains this exalted state of enlightenment, all his imperfections and worldly faults are got rid of, and he is deemed to be fulfilled and complete (19).

“Verse no. 20 = The 'Kali' (a personification of the delusions and ignorance that are the hallmarks of this artificial material world) is very unsteady, ever changing and fickle. When the creature comes in contact with it and begins to interact with it, it is bound to be influenced by the latter. Hence, the creature becomes veiled in all the doubts and confusions that are so characteristic of Kali inspite of the fact that the primary nature of the creature is to be free from all such negative traits as he is a personification of Brahm who is 'Nishkal', i.e. is without any taints, faults, shortcomings and imperfections, who is 'Nirmal', i.e. is pure, uncorrupt and immaculate, and who is like the 'Gagan', i.e. is like the sky element in its virtues of non-attachment and non-involvement inspite of being pregnant with so many impurities¹, its vastness, eternity and infinity (20).

[Note—¹The sky is full of so many things such as planets, stars, sun and the moon, asteroids and cosmic debris as well as with dust, gases and a horde of other forms of impurities. But the sky always remains non-attached with them. It is proved by the fact that we see a cloud sky one moment, and a few hours later the sky becomes absolutely clear.]

“Verse no. 21 = When the supreme transcendental consciousness abandons its state of being all-knowing and omniscient, it gets trapped in the web of ignorance and delusions. As a consequence, it forgets its eternal, imperishable and infinite nature and thinks in terms of having a birth or origin, having an existence and then coming to an end. It

oscillates between these states of existence and never finds peace; it wobbles and tosses about in the ocean represented by this cycle.

But why has it come to this sorry state of affairs? [This is because the consciousness or the pure ‘self’ of the creature thinks that it has a body and lives in the world, that the world is its home, that it does the various deeds and therefore must either enjoy their rewards or suffer from their consequences, and being identified with the body necessarily means that it would be subjected to all the incumbent problems that are so typical with the body. In short, it loses its pristine and divine form and gets mired in all the shortcomings and faults associated with the world.] (21).

“Verse no. 22 = Oh Mahabaho (the great Brahma)! Being shorn of Gyan, this consciousness or Atma becomes subjected to toss and flip caused by such opposing emotions as being sorrowful and agonized on the one hand, and happy and joyous on the other. It gets torn between them. It is engulfed in delusions and confusions, and behaves like an ordinary creature that is rapacious and lustful about this world of sense objects and yearns for self gratification. This is the way it lives in this world, remaining restless and agitated in the turmoil created by this delusory world (22).

“Verse no. 23 = Therefore, even if a man regards himself learned and wise but remains engrossed and submerged in pursuing this material world, has not been able to overcome his worldly desires and lust for it along with its sense objects and their attendant pleasures and comforts, then he is no better off than a person who is openly ignorant and deluded. He is deemed to be a worldly man who is shackled to it rather than a liberated soul (23).

“Verse no. 24 = If one remains like an ordinary ignorant man who is unaware of the delusory and trapping nature of this artificial material world, the world which is an ocean of problems and unhappiness, then say what is the use of his acquiring Gyan (by studying the scriptures and attending religious discourses for instance).

Only those who have resolutely inculcated the glorious virtues of detachment, dispassion and renunciation in them, who are steadfast and diligent in following the righteous, auspicious and noble path called the path of Dharma in their daily lives, and who have been able to control their sense organs in a comprehensive manner—only such people are able to have a firm foothold in the field of Gyan¹ (24).

[Note--¹This is because the charms of the world would not be able to sway a wise and enlightened man from his chosen spiritual path of righteousness and nobility of conduct. His life would be exemplary, and in spite of having to live like an ordinary creature in this world, his true ‘self’ never allows him to get entangled in the world. A wise man cannot avoid the world for the simple reason that the Atma resides in the physical body during its sojourn in this material world due to its past ignorance of its true nature, but such a man would not repeat his previous mistakes by getting engrossed in this world of artificiality again. Instead, he would treat this body as a God-sent opportunity to strive hard to reach his goal of finding a way out of this quagmire, and find liberation and final deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death. Once he makes this decision, he has crossed one important milestone in reaching the state of enlightenment. The rest follows as a natural progression if he is steady and resolute in his decision. Herein comes the role of self control and renunciation—because it is very hard and difficult to overcome natural urges of the senses which resist being controlled and

which have an innate tendency to move towards their objects in this material world. The world is also difficult to rebuff because it pretends to be one's most precious possession.]

“Verse no. 25 = Oh Vidhe (Brahma, the creator who formed the codes of conduct for his creation)! The creature cannot find Moksha, i.e. he cannot hope to obtain liberation from this gross physical body in which the Atma is trapped, without the aid of Yoga (meaning physical exercises and efforts in this direction).

Creatures with physical gross bodies are of two types—‘Paripakwa’ or those who are mature in wisdom, have the proper aptitude and mental preparedness for it, and ‘Aparipakwa’ or those who are immature and do not have the correct aptitude and inclination to do so (25).

“Verse no. 26 = Those who do not follow the path of Yoga are called ‘Aparipakwa’, while those who have Yoga as their chosen path are called ‘Pakrikwa’¹.

The fire of Yoga makes the gross body subtler and lighter; it makes it cleaner and purer by removing its grossness and other faults. The fire of Yoga helps to remove all sorts of problems associated with the body that torment the creature constantly² (26).

[Note—¹The ignorant people do not even know what Yoga is, and they do not bother about it because they do not wish to let their pampered body to suffer a bit. They would rather enjoy the comforts and pleasures of this material world and remain engrossed in seeking gratification for their sense organs. Their ignorance prevents them from even attempting to look beyond the body and its comforts—for them the world and the body is all there is to it in this world. They have no idea that there is something called the pure consciousness or Atma which is trapped in the body and from which entrapment it longs to break free. So who bothers, they think! Such people fall under the category of ‘Aparipakwa’.

Compared to them, there are wise and enlightened people who have realised who they actually are, that the main spiritual goal is not the pursuance of the material world and gratify the sense organs but to break free from this jail and let the Atma fly free from its encasement. How does the chick break free from the hardened shell of the egg? This example is before them. The chick has to make a diligent effort, for the egg's shell would not break out of its own free will. The same thing happens here—in order to break free from the fetters of the body, the wise ascetic has to make efforts, and the effort made is the various codes of conduct, the different exercises and the pristine philosophy of Yoga. The codes of conduct help them to regulate their body and life, the exercises tones their bodies and prepares them physically by harnessing sufficient energy to enable their Atma or soul or pure consciousness to launch itself on to its onwards journey towards eternal liberation, and the philosophy prepares them mentally and intellectually. To obtain final deliverance, all three legs are necessary, for otherwise there are chances of falling back even after the first few legs of freedom. It is just like the case when the rocket that is to be sent to distance planets must be provided sufficient energy and thrust so as to break free from the gravitational pull of the earth and go onwards on its outward journey.

²This is just like warming cold water or food to kill its bacteria and making them lighter and agreeable for the body. It is observed that as the water is warmed, the heated part of the water rises to the surface and the colder part sinks to the bottom of the vessel. In the cases of gases, heating makes them lighter and subtler so that they rise up. Extending this analogy to the body of the creature, practice of Yoga generates heat which not only cleans up the body of all trapped toxins by ejecting them out from their age-old niches in the body and eliminating them through the breath, sweat, mucous, urine and

stool, but also activates the dormant energy reserves in the body by unclogging various nerves and veins, thereby making the practitioner of Yoga more healthier and disease free. A healthy body is not only happy and comfortable for the creature but it also allows him to pursue his goal more vigorously and diligently because the mind would not be engaged in various problems associated with a diseased body and would have the time and freedom to pursue its objectives with greater energy and concentration.

Yoga Upanishads detail how Yoga helps the practitioner to easily conquer the various hurdles created by the body, the numerous benefits of practicing Yoga, and how liberation and deliverance of the soul is possible through it.]”

(20) Terminology of Yoga—

Now we shall quote various Upanishads to explain the different terms of Yoga.

(20) (i) The *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes these terms in detail in its Brahmin (canto) 1, section 1, verse nos. 3-11. These verses are quoted below—

“Verse no. 3 = [This verse describes the various *Yams*.]

To overcome the notion of feeling (excessive) heat and cold (and getting agitated about them), to have control over the urge to eat and sleep (more than necessary), to remain ever calm and tranquil (even during the greatest of adversities), to remain unwavering and steady (like a mountain and the flame of a lamp protected from the wind), and to be able to exercise control over the sense organs (of perception and action)—these are categorised as the various ‘Yams’ (3).

“Verse no. 4 = [This verse describes the various *Niyams*.]

Devotion towards one’s moral preceptor, teacher and guide called a Guru, dedication and diligent pursuit of the path which is righteous, auspicious and noble, contentedness with whatever is available, residence in a secluded and serene place that gives peace, solitude, tranquility and calmness, non-attachment with and indifference towards anything and anyone in this world, diversion of the mind from the sensual pleasures and charming objects of the materialistic world, no expectation of any reward from any deed done or action taken, and a sense of exemplary renunciation—all these are the various ‘Niyams’ to be followed by the seekers of true knowledge of the Atma (4).

“Verse no. 5 = [This verse describes the various *Aasans* or the sitting postures during meditation.]

To sit in a posture that is comfortable for a long time without making the aspirant restless is called ‘Sukhaasan’. To remain in a single posture without making any especial efforts to do so, i.e. without even being aware that one is sitting in that posture, is called ‘Chirniwas’. [That is, any sitting posture that enables the aspirant to sit comfortably for a long period of time at a stretch is preferred to a formal posture that, though advised by experts, gives restlessness because such postures would not be conducive to concentration of the mind due to the pain and discomfort caused to the body.] (5).

“Verse no. 6 = [This verse describes *Pranayam*, or the various breath control exercises.]

Pranayam¹ is defined as a process involving three steps—viz. (a) ‘Purak’² which is done by using sixteen Matras, (b) ‘Kumbhak’³ which is done by using sixty-four Matras, and (c) ‘Rechak’⁴ which is done by using thirty-two Matras by the wise one (6).

[Note—¹The word *Pranayam* refers to the control of the breath employing various meditative techniques. It has the following three components as follows—

²*Purak*—This is inhalation of breath or fresh air through the nostrils. The time taken to do so is determined by the time taken to say or remember the sixteen ‘Matras’ which are the Sanskrit vowel sounds which form the basis of all Mantras, which are the various words or phrases made up of letters or syllables having divine and mystical powers. These sixteen Matras are the following-- A (अ), Aa (आ), E (इ), Ee (ई), U or Oo (उ), Uu or Ooo (ऊ), Ri (ऋ), Rii (ॠ), Ae (ए), Aye (ऐ), O (ओ), Ou (औ), Ang (अं), Aha (अः), Lri (ऌ) and Lrii (ॡ).

³*Kumbhak*—This is the stage when the inhaled breath is held inside the body for a given period of time. The time for which it should be held is determined by the time taken to say or remember the above Matras four times, i.e. sixty-four Matras are pronounced. This is because there are in all sixteen Matras, and when they are repeated four times, the total comes to sixty-four.

⁴*Rechak*—This is the last stage when the held breath is vented out or exhaled from the body, taking the time which is twice the time taken to inhale it, i.e. the time taken to say thirty-two Matras. Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/95-97.

The scientific logic is that the fresh oxygen laden pure air that is inhaled inside the body is taken slowly so that it is able to energise the blood vessels connected to the nostrils and the lung-complex. Then when it is held inside the body for a given length of time as prescribed, it is able to oxidize the internal tissues and collect toxic gases and other residual waste matters that have gone up and collected in the lungs with the help of the various vital winds, especially the Vyan, Samaan and Udaan, and needs to be expelled much like the waste residual gases etc. are eliminated through the chimney of a factory. Finally, it is spouted out of the body during the process of Rechak, or exhalation.]

“Verse no. 7 = [This verse describes *Pratyahar*.]

Pratyahar is defined as the control of the mind and the intellect from getting engrossed with, attached to, lured by, or attracted towards the various sense objects of this material world. In other words, it is the control of the various senses of perception that compulsively impel a man towards this artificial world and consequentially get trapped in its snare (7).

“Verse no. 8 = [This verse describes *Dharna*.]

Dharna is defined as focusing of the mind-intellect complex upon the truthful entity which is pure consciousness with firmness of conviction and steadfastness of beliefs, which would involve pulling the mind-intellect away from the objects of senses and taming its wayward habits (8).

“Verse no. 9 = [This verse describes *Dhyan*.]

Dhyan has been defined as constant remembrance of and contemplation on the universal metaphysical Truth—that the same supreme, transcendental, divine and pure entity is universally and uniformly present in all the living creatures who have a gross body in this creation/ visible world as their consciousness (called the Atma) (9).

“Verse no. 10 = [This verse describes the essential meaning of *Samadhi*.]

Samadhi is defined as the state when the spiritual aspirant/seeker need not consciously contemplate upon the pure consciousness. He has reached the transcendental state of consciousness which is like being numb or being senseless when all thoughts cease. Here, even Dhyān (i.e. memory, recall, remembrance) is forgotten. Such a state becomes natural to an enlightened spiritual seeker; it does not require any kind of conscious effort on his part. It is a perpetual state of remaining engrossed in self awareness, and which is marked by total unawareness of the external world. [When this state reaches its climax, the aspirant continues to go about his routine work in this world, doing his duties normally, but internally he remains aloof and does not even remember what he has done and what he is supposed to do next.] (10).

“Verse no. 11 = All the above eight terms succinctly define the finer aspects of Yoga (which is contemplation and meditation upon the pure consciousness called the true self or the Atma). A person who understands these basic principles of Yoga and self-realisation becomes eligible and competent to attain Mukti, i.e. he is entitled to attain emancipation and salvation for his soul; he becomes eligible for liberation and deliverance (11).”

(20) (ii) The *Tejobindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse nos. 15-19, 25-27, 31-42 describes the concepts of Yoga and its terminology with emphasis on their metaphysical importance and spiritual significance. Let us see what it has to say—

“Verse no. 15. The supreme transcendental Brahm can be witnessed and experienced by a spiritual aspirant by diligently following the eclectic tenets pertaining to the principles of Yam, Niyam¹, Tyag², Maun³, Desh and Kaal⁴.

Other paths are doing Yoga in accordance with its profound philosophy of practicing various Aasans⁵, other exercises such as Moolbandh⁶, uniform restraint of the various organs of the body and keeping them restrained, calm and restful, and focusing the sight on one's objective and aims in life without getting distracted by so many different perceptions and confusing ideas and views that occur in this world of myriad notions (i.e. being of a steady mind and intellect as well as unwavering in one's spiritual pursuits). (15)

[Note--¹The ten ‘Yams’ are—truthfulness, forgiveness, simplicity, Dhyān (meditation, concentration of the mind), lack of cruelty (or presence of compassion and mercy), forsaking violence, restraint of mind and sense organs, pleasant demeanors and sweet towards all). The ten ‘Niyams’ are—cleanliness/ablution, bath (purification of body), Tapa (austerities, penances, sufferings), alms and charities, keeping silence, Yagya (sacrifices, religious rituals), self study, observance of vows, keeping fasts, celibacy. (Skanda Puran, Bra. Dha. Ma. 5/19-21)

The Varaha Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its canto 5, verse nos. 12 ½ --14 also describes these Yams and Niyams.

²Tyag can be broadly defined as renunciation, detachment, non-involvement, disinterest and dispassion as well as abandonment of all things that are not conducive to one's spiritual well being, which bog down the creature in the swamp of delusions and false charms of this world based on ignorance of reality, and which cause hurdles in one's long term spiritual goal, enlightenment, emancipation and salvation.

³*Maun* is to keep silent and not speaking anything not true; to abhor talking unnecessarily, and even of things about which no certainty can be ascertained. For example, no one can precisely define Brahm, so it is better to keep quiet about it than to boast of knowing who or what Brahm is by unnecessarily attempting to describe it to prove one's knowledge and expertise in the scriptures.

⁴*Desh and Kaal* refer to a certain period of time, era, location and circumstance to which a reference is being made when something is said so as to properly understand its context and decipher the correct meaning in that context.

⁵*Aasans* are the various sitting postures adopted during Yoga, or while doing meditation and contemplating upon some serious topic. These have been elaborately described in all Upanishads dealing with the subject of Yoga. One of the Aasans dealt with here is Siddhasana in verse no. 26 below.

⁶*Moolbandh* is a form of Yoga exercise fully described in the Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 73-74^{1/2}, as well as in verse no. 27 below.]

“Verse no. 16 = The spiritual aspirant should practice the six paths of Yoga which are conducive to providing success to him in his spiritual pursuit. These are Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharna, Dhyana, Asana and Samadhi. These paths help in witnessing and experiencing the supreme Divinity by the aspirant (16).

[Note--According to Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 41 belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the *six limbs of Yoga* are the following—Asana (sitting posture), Pranayama (breath control), Pratyahara (withdrawal of the mind and its control), Dharna (having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path), Dhyana (contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect), and Samadhi (a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation). Also refer Amrita Naad Upanishad, verse nos. 5-8, 16-17.]

“Verse no. 17 = ‘Everything is Brahm’—realising the profundity of this great maxim of the scriptures, one should practice restraint over all the organs of the body, the gross organs (such as the organs of perception—eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin, and the organs of action—legs, hands, mouth, genitals and excretory) as well as the subtle organs (mind and intellect). This is called ‘Yama’, and it should be constantly and diligently practiced (17).

“Verse no. 18 = ‘Niyama’ has been defined as the acceptance and implementation of knowledge that is eclectic, truthful, holy and spiritual in nature as well as conducive to acquisition of true wisdom, enlightenment, self-realisation and Brahm-realisation, and rejection of that knowledge which has an opposite effect¹.

Wise, erudite and sagacious spiritual aspirants find supreme happiness and bliss if they diligently follow this tenet about what constitutes true ‘Niyama’ (18).

[Note--¹That is, all forms of knowledge, skills and learning that pull the creature away from the truth and put a spanner in his endeavours to reach higher goals in life, and instead entangle him in the web of falsehoods and delusions represented by this material world of sense objects characterised by uncountable forms of mental turmoil and physical discomfort, a world which is nevertheless hollow, perishable and transient, should best be avoided and abandoned altogether because such knowledge does not give eternal happiness and peace, because this knowledge is misleading, because this knowledge keeps the creature bogged down in this world of artificiality and illusionary charms that keeps him

far away from spiritual enlightenment and salvation, and because such knowledge keeps the creature tossing and churning in the midst of this world much like a piece of helpless wood caught in a choppy ocean during a storm.

On the other hand, that knowledge which bestows eternal peace and blissfulness upon the creature and helps him to realise his true goal in life, aiding him in his search of finding his roots originating in the divine fount of this eternal peace and blissfulness—the fount of supreme transcendental Divinity represented by the mystical ‘Tej Bindu’ which is a metaphor for the mystical point from which everything eclectic, sublime, holy and divine has sprung forth in this creation like an eternal cosmic fountain of effervescent cosmic energy along with pulsating spiritual vibrancy and vitality, and which is given the name of ‘Brahm’—so that his soul gets final rest and peace by realising its high birth, its noble pedigree, its divine heritage, its eternal and exalted nature as pure consciousness which is completely different from the delusions that are hallmarks of this world. This knowledge provides the soul with emancipation and deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death as well as from being tossed and kicked around by delusions and ignorance, and therefore it is to be welcomed and grasped with both the hands.]

“Verse no. 19 = ‘Tyag’ (renunciation, abandonment, retraction, forsaking, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement) of all things worldly, non-truthful and non-spiritual is regarded as the best form of spiritual observances. Tyag leads the path to obtaining liberation and deliverance quickly (19).

[Note—It is only when a spiritual aspirant gets totally detached from this material world and renounces all its pleasures and comforts that he can whole-heartedly pursue his spiritual goals without any kind of mental distraction or emotional shackles. He would have nothing to worry about, no assets to protect, no material objects and goals to acquire and achieve, no one to please, no bias towards anything, and no obligations to keep. It is just like a student who is free to concentrate on his studies is expected to do much better than one who has to look after his family if the bread earner father has passed away, for in the latter case this poor lad would find it difficult to devote his entire time and energy on his studies.]

“Verse no. 25 = ‘Aasan’ is defined as that sitting posture of meditation in which one can sit reasonably comfortably and contemplate and fix his mind upon the thoughts of the supreme Brahm without any kind of discomfort which might cause distraction in meditation, thereby hindering its successful progress.

The thoughts of Brahm is so fulfilling and blissful that when one sits in a comfortable Aasan and meditates upon this eternal fount of beatitude and felicity, all other charms fade away and lose their attractions (just like the case when one finds a spring of fresh and pure mineral water he would forget drinking water drawn from a polluted lake or river, no matter how holy it might be). All his desires to obtain comforts and pleasures from other source of happiness in this deluding world subside once he has discovered this sparkling eternal fount of blissfulness (25).

“Verse no. 26 = All the Aasans¹ are equally important and are able to help the spiritual aspirant achieve his goal of Brahm-realisation and self-realisation, as well as acquire mystical powers. The various designated Aasans are the best postures that should be adopted if one wishes to achieve success in his meditative practice (without discomfort and distractions). That Aasan by which ascetics obtain mystical powers is called ‘Siddha Aasan’ (26).

[Note—¹Proper sitting postures are very important in meditation just like they are in every field of life. For example, one should sit in a particular fashion while working at the computer for long hours if one wishes to maintain concentration without damaging the eyes and harming the body over long periods of time. Similarly, there are proper ways in which the body should be borne while one sleeps, walks, runs, and does so many other routine things in life to stay healthy and prevent chronic diseases of the skeleton and muscles and keep the body properly tuned. These Aasans have been described in Upanishads dealing with Yoga philosophy, such as Yogchudamani and Jabal Darshan (Canto 3) of the Sam Veda tradition, and Mandal Brahmin of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, as well as the Dhyana Bindu Upanishad and the Amritnaad Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

²The *Siddha Aasan*-- To sit in this posture, the two legs are first stretched out. The left leg is then bent at the knee and folded in so that the heel touches the genitals and the sole lies flat against the inner thighs of the right leg. Then the right leg is folded in and the heel is placed in front of the pubic bone and the sole touches the inner thigh of the previously folded left leg. The two hands are stretched out and the outer side of the wrist of each hand is placed on the bent knee-joint of the respective side. The palm is opened and the thumb is touched by the bent first finger to form a virtual ring, with the remaining three fingers held straight out. The practitioner sits perfectly in a ram-rod straight position, with the spine, the neck and the head in a straight line. The mental sight is fixed on a spot in front of the nose, and this state of intense concentration is maintained as long as is feasible for the practitioner. Then the legs are gradually unfolded and after some period of relaxation, the process is repeated with the opposite leg being folded in first and placed below the other leg. It is believed that this posture is one of the best postures to be adopted for Yoga amongst the eighty four lakh (84×10^5) postures of meditation. The fact that there are as many numbers of Aasans as there are species of living beings is endorsed by Dyanbindu Upanishad, verse no. 42 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. This Siddha Aasan is capable of cleansing all the seventy two thousand Naadis (ducts in the body), and is so-called because it is possible to access the divine source of cosmic energy trapped inside the body as well as experience the cosmic power of the kindled Spirit by employing this Aasan. The word 'Siddha' implies one who has acquired stupendous mystical and supernatural powers that are beyond the parameters of the physical and mundane world.]

“Verse no. 27 = The ‘Moolbandh’ is closing of that spot in the body which is like the base or foundation for all living beings. It is possible to control the mind and its attention by controlling this Mool or root, which can be done by closing it or doing the Moolbandh. Those who are well versed in the philosophy pertaining to meditation as a tool of Brahm-realisation should be very particular about it (as it helps them to control their mind and its faculties) (27).

[Note--The word ‘Mool’ means the origin or basis of anything, and ‘bandh’ means to stop or close. The Moolbandh is done by pressing the genitals with the heels and constricting the muscles of the anus to close this opening. Meanwhile, the Apaana Vayu (the wind present in the rectum and anus region) is pulled upwards forcefully. It is described in Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 73-74^{1/2} and Yog-Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 42 of Krishna Yajur Veda which are part of this volume, as well as in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 46 of Sam Veda tradition.]

“Verse no. 31 = True form of Pranayam (exercising restraint of the vital winds) is when one is able to restrain all his mental ‘Vrittis’¹, and have a firmness of mind and

conviction with regard to the fact that this entire creation is Brahm personified, that there is nothing in existence that is not Brahm (31).

[Note—¹The term *Vritti* refers to the natural inclinations and habits of the mind and its wayward tendencies. Since the mind controls one's attention, thoughts and intelligence as well as the organs of perception and action in the gross body, the extended form of this term includes the natural tendency of the creature to veer towards things which give it instant gratification and pleasure even at the cost of its long term harm. Even as Pranayam is considered as the bulwark in the field of meditation exercises as it helps to cleanse the body of all toxins and prepare the practitioner to progress further in his spiritual practice, control of Vrittis is equally important and effective tool to help him to control his mind which is at the root of all activities.]

“Verse no. 32 = To remove the mind from the entire array of delusions and magical charms spread all around it in this material world is tantamount to the ‘Rechak’ phase of Pranayam¹. Similarly, to have a firmness of conviction and steadiness in belief in the truthfulness of the maxim and the universal axiom of the Vedas that ‘I am Brahm personified’ (‘Aham Brahmasmi’) is tantamount to the Puruk phase of Pranayam². (32).

[Note--¹The *Rechak* phase means exhaling breath after holding it for a while inside the body so that all accumulated waste gases and toxins are eliminated along with it. This is like the washing off or the cleansing phase of Pranayam. Here the word ‘Rechak’ implies the spiritual aspirant has cleansed his inner self of all spiritual impurities and tainting affects of the delusory world that has cast a dark shadow on the aspirant's immaculate Atma which is ‘true self’.

²The *Purak* phase refers to inhaling fresh breath after stale one has been let out during the Rechak phase. Here the implication is that after all the corrupting thoughts have been eliminated from the mind, and after the mind is cleansed of all their ill influences, the aspirant is now prepared to receive fresh noble thoughts and fill his innards with refined views of the creation that are invigorating for his spirit much like oxygen rich inhaled air is invigorating for his body.

This statement ‘I am Brahm’ is one of the so-called ‘Maha Vakya’s and they have been explained in great detail in ‘Shukar Rahasya Upanishad’. They are also the subject matter of many great Upanishads, such as Kaivalyo-panishad, verse no. 16; Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse nos. 12-14 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Atmo-panishad and Mahavakya Upanishad of Atharva Veda tradition; Atma Bodh Upanishad of Rig Veda tradition; Paingalo-panishad, 3-2 and Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.]

“Verse no. 33 = To control the various ‘Vrittis’ of the mind and intellect (as described in note to verse no. 31) is tantamount to doing Khumbhak phase of Pranayam for wise and enlightened ascetics¹. Stupid and ignorant people think that merely pressing the nose and preventing the winds from escaping from the nose is doing Kumbhak (33).

[Note—¹*Kumbhak* is the phase of Pranayam when inhaled air is withheld inside the body for a fixed time before it is expelled. The idea of ‘holding of the breath’ is extended here to incorporate the controlling of the wayward tendencies of the mind, as reining in of the mind is of utmost importance for success in any endeavour, be it spiritual or otherwise. This holding of the Vrittis is like bridling the horse, putting a harness to it and yoking it to the chariot while it is strictly reined in by an expert charioteer. Otherwise the chariot would have a good chance of tumbling over the roadside if the horse is not put under tight leash.

There is another way of looking at 'Kumbhak' phase of Pranayam from the perspective of metaphysics. When the aspirant has imbibed noble virtues as implied by the 'Purak' phase as indicated in verse no. 32 above, he is asked here to retain them inside his inner being during the Kumbhak phase so as to benefit from them instead of frittering them away by quickly doing 'Rechak' phase or symbolically eliminating them along with the exhalation of breath. Even as oxygen-rich inhaled breath taken in during the Purak phase benefits the body when it is allowed to remain inside the body for certain period of time so that it can sufficiently oxidize the tissues and reinvigorate the body before it is exhaled, these imbibed good and auspicious virtues should be given time to mould the inherent character and personality of the aspirant for his overall good; they should be allowed to percolate down his inner self to bring about an effective positive change in the overall nature, attitude and outlook of the aspirant. This change would be reflected in his behaviour and thinking processes.]

“Verse no. 34 = The firm conviction and a holistic view that the same universal cosmic entity known as the Atma is uniformly present in all the objects in this world that are the subject of various perceptions such as sight, smell, hearing, tasting and feeling, to be able to see that single non-dual universal Atma everywhere, is called the true form of Pratyahar¹. This all-inclusive and universal view of the presence of Divinity everywhere and in everything helps the spiritual aspirant in cleansing his mind and intellect of all forms of impurities.

Hence, a wise aspirant should practice it with due diligence and sincerity to become an expert in this view of thinking² (34).

[Note—¹*Pratayahar* is withdrawal of the mind and its control. This verse compliments verse no. 33.

²When one becomes steady in his beliefs then no matter how much he has to suffer or how strong are the forces of delusions sweeping over him like a strong gale, he would stand his ground and not waver from his chosen path even for a fleeting moment no matter what compulsions he has to face.]

“Verse no. 35 = ‘Dharna’ is to have the vision of the supreme transcendental Brahm in all the places where the mind goes, and to have firmness of conviction and faith in this vision. This is the best form of having the virtue of Dharna as a tool to realise Brahm (35).

[Note—*Dharna* is one of the six limbs of Yoga. It briefly means to have a firm conviction, faith and belief in connection with something. When the spiritual aspirant begins to see Brahm everywhere wherever the mind goes, he would be having a non-dual vision of Brahm, and this view would compliment what has already been said earlier in previous verses.]

“Verse no. 36 = ‘Dhyan’ is to be steady in the thought of ‘I am Brahm personified’ (see verse no. 32), to be constantly engrossed in meditating and focusing the mind upon the ‘truthful self’ as a personified Brahm to the extent that no other props or supports are needed to reinforce this conviction. This realisation, this firm conviction, this enlightened view about Brahm and the ‘self’ provides immense happiness and bliss (36).

[Note—*Dhyan* is defined as contemplation and deep concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect. It is also regarded as one of the six limbs of Yoga. Obviously, no great achievement is possible without a focused and concentrated mind. So if the spiritual aspirant is firm in his conviction that his Atma is Brahm personified, it would aid him in

his spiritual upliftment as compared to the situation when he is full of doubts about the authenticity of this statement and keeps on jumping ships in the hope of reaching his spiritual destination, in which case he would be left neither here nor there.]

“Verse no. 37 = The last step in spiritual endeavour is the eclectic and transcendental state of ‘Samadhi’. It is the apex of the pyramidal structure of all types of spiritual pursuits because it represents that perpetual state of supreme blissfulness obtained by complete enlightenment that comes with self-realisation and Brahm-realisation that transcends all other forms of mystical achievements.

When all the misconceptions, taints, deformations and defects of the mind and heart that have their origin in delusions and ignorance about the reality are eliminated, when they are thoroughly cleansed of all impure thoughts and made immune to all sorts of distractions and corrupting influences that ordinarily taint the creature’s immaculate ‘self’, and when this makes him steady, sincere and diligent in his spiritual pursuit, it is only then that the excellent notion of ‘I am Brahm personified’ dawns on the spiritual horizon of any spiritual aspirant. [In all other cases, if a person makes this statement, he is, in all probability, being deceitful and untruthful.]

Samadhi is that state of existence when all other thoughts are sincerely banished from the mind for good except the eclectic and sublime thought of ‘I am Brahm personified’¹. This eclectic thought takes firm hold and sweeps away all other thoughts from the spiritual aspirant’s mind and heart for good (resulting in the state of utter blissfulness described in verse no. 38 below) (37).

[Note--¹Here, the word ‘I’ refers to the pure conscious Atma residing in the subtle heart of the spiritually enlightened person. This individual Atma of the creature is a microcosmic counterpart of the all-pervading, supreme, transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. This Brahm has manifested itself in the form of the visible world consisting of animate creatures as well as inanimate things, and therefore all that exists is nothing but Brahm, including the person who makes this solemn statement ‘I am Brahm personified’. Of course, as it is obvious here, if this statement comes from a convinced heart in a convincing manner, it is indeed a realisation of the great truth by such a man, and therefore he is indeed enlightened. Otherwise, such a statement is unwarranted and uncalled for, and it is full of deceit and like cheating one’s own self as well as all the others around.]

Since the aim of all spiritual pursuit is to realise this supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm, the ultimate Truth and Reality in creation, so when a person has sincerely made this statement without any trace of deceit and doubt that ‘I am Brahm personified’, it is deemed that he has realised that final goal of all spiritual endeavours, i.e. he has come to terms with the great doctrine of the Vedas that the Supreme Being known as Brahm is not somewhere high up in the sky but immediately here and even so close to the person that the person and Brahm are indistinguishable from one another. In other words, the enlightened person becomes as holy and divine as the cosmic Divinity itself.

Samadhi is the stage in spiritual efforts when the aspirant has transcended other stages in the spiritual hierarchy and reached a trance like state of existence marked by perpetual blissfulness obtained when one has tasted the nectar of eternity, beatitude and felicity springing forth from the pure conscious Atma, the true ‘self’ of the spiritual aspirant, which in turn is a personification of the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. When this realisation dawns upon the spiritual horizon of the aspirant, no other experiences matter.]

“Verse no. 38 = The eclectic sense of blissfulness, the perpetual state of beatitude and felicity obtained during Samadhi is eternal, natural, genuine, of a high profile and quality, effusive and effervescent in nature, while all other types of happiness and joys are false, artificial and transient.

Constant practice of Samadhi and other spiritual methods (as enumerated in this Upanishad) makes an ascetic perfect in his spiritual achievements, and he ultimately attains his goal of Brahm and ‘self’ realisation. He effectively becomes a personification of the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the true sense of the word. This divine enlightenment makes him spiritually liberated and delivered; he attains emancipation and salvation for his soul even while he is still alive in this world and has a physical body. This is called ‘Jivan Mukti’—to be liberated and delivered even while living in this world with a gross body and going about one’s normal duties vis-à-vis the world¹ (38).

[Note—¹In other words, when he has become enlightened and self-realised, it does not matter to him whether or not ‘he’ (i.e. his ‘true self’, the pure conscious Atma, the soul, the divine Spirit present in his body) has a physical body or not, for he had totally disassociated himself from the latter and remains in a complete detached state of mind. It does not matter to him whether or not his body suffers from any disease for instance, whether or not the body is comfortable or in discomfort, and so on and so forth.]

“Verse no. 39 = When he has reached this exalted state of existence as obtained during Samadhi, he does not need the help of any other means in his spiritual progress any further. He has become the ‘attained one’, the ‘realised one’, ‘the enlightened one’. Such a person is deemed to be a king amongst ascetics and spiritual aspirants. He has obtained mystical powers and potentials which are supernatural.

He becomes totally submerged and soaked in the thoughts of Brahm. All his sense perceptions, his mind and heart, as well as his faculty of speech become devoted to Brahm; they are centered around Brahm; Brahm becomes the pivot around which his entire being, his whole existence revolves.

This unique state of existence in which nothing exists and nothing else matters for him but Brahm makes such a devoted ascetic firmly established in the truthful form of Brahm realisation, i.e. he becomes a living embodiment of the glories and divinity of Brahm (39).

“Verse no. 40-41 = As soon as the ascetic reaches the state of Samadhi, numerous problems and hurdles suddenly present themselves before him, trying to deviate him from his path and demote him from his spiritual achievements. He is often enmeshed in their web and falls from his chosen path.

Some of these spiritual obstacles are the following—to deviate and waver from the chosen path to research the truth of Brahm, i.e. the path of Brahm-realisation, to be overcome with lethargy, indolence and inertia, to have a desire and longing to gratify the sense organs and enjoy the objects of these sense organs and their attendant pleasures and comforts, to have worldly passions, lust and yearnings, and be infatuated with the objects that arouse such emotions (40), to be engulfed in the darkness of ignorance and delusions causing bewilderment and confusions in the absence of light of truthful knowledge and erudition about the reality and its accompanying enlightenment and wisdom, to be

deterred by efforts made during meditation which cause so much exertion that one begins to sweat, to be so much mentally distracted that it is difficult to fix attention on the chosen goal, etc.

A wise and erudite aspirant of spiritualism should exercise special caution and guard against these pitfalls and remain wary of them. He should painstakingly keep them at bay (41) [40-41.]

“Verse no. 42 = ‘One becomes what one thinks about constantly’—this is an established adage. So when one begins to remain indifferent to and immune from all emotions and thoughts other than that of Brahm, when one inculcates the habit of remaining in a state of perpetual indifference and non-involvement in anything pertaining to this existence other than the thoughts of Brahm, it is natural that gradually the mind and its natural tendencies withdraw from everything else and become concentrated on this one single point, the thoughts of Brahm.

Hence, the true state of Samadhi, its true accomplishment and its real consummation is when the ascetic begins to think that Brahm is present as his own self as affirmed and asserted by the great saying of the Vedas, i.e. ‘I am Brahm’. When this happens, the ascetic has come full circle. This is the holistic and all-inclusive view and philosophy pertaining to Brahm. The ascetic must practice this state of fulsome realisation of Brahm during his Samadhi (42).”

(20) (iii) The *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 28-34 describes these terms in the following way—

“Verse no. 28 = To have total dispassion towards this perishable body and its organs is called ‘Yam’, or self-restraint, by the wise ones [28].

“Verse no. 29 = ‘Niyam’, literally meaning regular and diligent practice of spiritual tenets with devotion and consistency, is to have constant, consistent and persistent devotion and endearment towards the essential and ultimate Truth which is supreme and transcendental, irrefutable and unequivocal (and which is known as ‘Brahm’).

The best ‘Asan’, or sitting posture, is to have total and sincere dispassion towards, be detached from and remain indifferent to all the objects of this material world [29].

[Note—The word ‘Asan’ means to ‘come and sit comfortably’. One can sit with ease only when his mind and body are rested and peaceful. One cannot sit still if there is physical discomfort or the mind remains fidgety due to a variety of reasons. He would, for example, glance surreptitiously here and there, prick his nose, scratch his body, shift positions, or even fall asleep. This is not true Asan. So, to sit in Asan implies that total self control is practiced, and this is possible when both the mind and the body become oblivious of the surrounding world and its disturbing impulses.]

“Verse no. 30 = ‘Pranayam’, literally meaning to exercise control over breath and other vital winds of the body, is to be perpetually aware of the illusionary and false nature of this world. ‘Pratyahar’, literally referring to the control of the mind, is to divert mind-intellect away from the external world, and instead focus it in contemplation, to turn it inwards and direct its efforts in the search of the Atma, to inspire it towards contemplation and meditation on the absolute Truth in this creation, to be quiet, tranquil

both externally and internally, and to abandon extrovert tendencies of the mind. (See also verse no.130 for elaboration on Pratyahar) [30].

“Verse no.31 = ‘Dharna’, literally meaning to have a firm belief, conviction and faith, is to have an unwavering, stable and steadfast mind and intellect. ‘Dhyan’, is to contemplate, meditate, focus the attention on something, and to ponder constantly upon the fact that ‘I am an image of that pure consciousness’. (See also verse no. 134 in this context) [31].

“Verse no. 32-34 = ‘Samadhi’, literally to be in a perpetual trance like state of bliss and be oblivious of the external world, is to completely forget about everything, even that one has forgotten anything at all.

Non-violence, truthfulness, non stealing, celibacy, continence or abstinence from sexual indulgences and other pervert activities of the body and mind, mercy and compassion, simplicity and humility (32), forgiveness, patience and fortitude, restrained eating, and purity of mind, intellect and body---these are regarded as the ten supreme ‘Yams’. ‘Tapa’, meaning austerity, penance, sufferance and hardships endured for some noble cause, ‘Santosh’, meaning contentedness and satiety, to have belief on the doctrines and teachings of the scriptures, to make charities and donations, the remembrance of the supreme Lord known as ‘Hari’ and devotedly serving him and contemplating upon him¹ (33), hearing Vedanta (the preaching of Upanishads), to have modesty, honour, dignity, self respect and shame, to have wisdom and intelligence, to repeat the holy Mantras or divine, ethereal words of the Lord, and to keep stern religious vows and observe fasting---these are ten ‘Niyams’.

Oh Brahmin! Now the various sitting postures called ‘Asans’, such as ‘Swastik’ and others are being described (34).”

(20) (iv) *Amrit Naad Upanishad*, in its various verses defines the basic terms of Yoga.

(a) Pratyahar—“*Amrit Naad Upanishad*, Verse no. 5 gives a detailed explanation of the concept of *Pratyahar*. It says—“A wise and erudite man should treat his pure conscious Atma as a Sun whose brilliant rays illuminates the world. [That is, even as the world is made visible when it is lighted by the Sun’s rays, it is the consciousness present inside the body of the creature that enables him to see and become aware of the world through the different sense perceptions of the body. Had it not been for the Atma, the body, left to its own account, would not have been able to perceive this world or know anything about it. This is proved by the fact that when the creature dies, i.e. when the Atma has left his body, he is not able to recognise or perceive the existence of the world inspite of the fact that all the organs are still there as before. The Sun is like the Atma, while its light is like the consciousness that emanates from the Atma. Even as the Sun and its rays are synonymous with each other and can’t be separated from one another, the Atma and its consciousness are the same and inseparable. Just like a man would not be able to see anything in the dark of the night when the Sun’s rays are not able to illuminate the objects in this world, a man would not be able to see or perceive this world without the sense organs of perception which are the external receptors for the mind that actually does the perceiving of the world.]

In other words, it is the presence of the ‘consciousness’ in the form of the Atma residing in the bosom of the man that enables him to receive the stimuli in raw form from

the external world through the organs of perceptions, and then use the mind to interpret them sensibly and classify them into various sense perceptions, such as sight, taste, sound, smell and feeling or touch. The Atma then uses the intellect to deduce an intelligent meaning from them and create a picture of the world in its mind-intellect complex. So, the entire process of being aware of the external world, receiving it through the sense organs of perception, making sense of it and reacting accordingly—all depends upon one single factor which is conscious and alive, which is the supreme Authority at the center of the entire reconnaissance, command and action mechanism of the creature, and without which the entire edifice of life and the existential world would lose their importance and relevance for him.

It is in the 'light' radiating out from this Sun-like consciousness known as the Atma that the mind and intellect show their stupendous powers and potentials, and the organs of perceptions (and of actions for that matter) too mark their presence felt by carrying out their respective functions which are typical to them and that are unique to the existence of 'life' in any form. A dead body would not perceive anything whatsoever.

Again, it is this consciousness or Atma which 'lights up', or infuses the vital factors of 'life, awareness, alertness, energy, strength, ability, drive and vitality' into these two units of the body (i.e. the subtle body made up of mind-intellect complex, and the gross body made up of the organs of perceptions and action, at the micro level of the individual creature, as well as the entire creation at the macro level) to enable them to carry out their functions effectively. These different functions of the body are collectively responsible for the showcasing of the most astounding and mysterious characteristics that distinguish 'life' in this creation.

In other words, had there been no consciousness, the world with all its alluring charms and enchanting attractions which are so gratifying for the sense organs and keep the mind enthralled and captivated, would automatically lose their relevance and importance. It would be like seeing the world in the dark of night.

Therefore, realising this fact, the wise and erudite aspirant should endeavour to turn away from all things that have no real worth in the world because they are not true and not illuminated themselves (i.e. he should turn away from those things of the artificial world which have no real importance, glory and value of their own, but instead depend upon the Atma to give them their importance). He should exercise restraint on his sense organs as well as the mind-intellect complex and focus them on something of real value and true importance, which is the 'consciousness' called the Atma. Had there been no Atma, the rest of the things in this world would have no value and importance whatsoever.

Exercising control over the sense organs and the mind so that they are preventing from being restless and naturally gravitating towards non-essential entities of the delusory world which have no pith and reality in them, and instead remaining under control and disciplined, is called 'Pratyahar'¹. Pratyahar is therefore putting a tight leash on both the gross body as well as the subtle body of the creature to control their vagaries, recklessness and intransigence (5).

[Note—¹*Pratyahar* has been defined in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/1/7 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition in the following words—"Pratyahar is defined as the control of the mind and the intellect from getting engrossed with, attached to, lured by, or attracted towards the various sense objects of this material world. In other words, it is the control

of the various senses of perception that impel a man towards this artificial world and get trapped in its snare.”]

The *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 68-69 describe *Pratyahar* in the following words—“Verse nos. 68-69 = The process of Kumbhak (holding of the inhaled air inside the body) should be practiced only once a day. While doing this, he should diligently pull or withdraw all his sense organs from their respective objects, and rein them in. This is called ‘Pratyahar’. Whatever is seen by the eyes at that time should be treated as nothing but the Atma or pure consciousness (68-69).”

(20) (iv) (b) Pranayam—The concept of Pranayam have been explained in relation to the divine Mantra OM in *Kshuriko-panishad*, verse nos. 2-5, and *Amrit Naad Upanishad*, Verse no. 7-8, 10-14, 21-22 both of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. Now let us examine what they have to say on the subject. What is the holistic way of doing Pranayam has been explained in *Annapurna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 5, verse nos. 25-27.

The Kshuriko-panishad, verse no. 2-5—“[These four verses describe the process of *Pranayam** or breath control exercises that are integral to doing Yoga.]

It has been prescribed by the self-existent and self-begotten Brahma, the primary creator of the entire creation who is called ‘Swayambhu’ in the sense that he had no father or ancestor from whom he descended because he is said to be ‘self-created’, as well as extolled and ratified by the primary scriptures known as the Vedas, that the spiritual aspirant should do Yoga (meditation and contemplation) in a systematic way and according to the stipulated procedure. For this purpose, he should select a calm and serene place, free from all types of disturbances, whether mental or physical, and sit down in a proper sitting posture called Aasans¹.

He should put the wayward and wandering tendencies of the mind and heart, which are intrinsically restless and in a state of constant flux, under strict control and tight leash by withdrawing his mind and heart from all worldly attractions and the distractions that they inherently create much like a tortoise withdrawing its limbs into its shell when it decides to do so².

This inhalation process is called ‘Purak’, meaning one that fills up. The time taken to inhale this breath should be equivalent to the time taken to mentally pronounce twelve Matras (letters or syllables) of Pranav, or the sublime and ethereal word OM³. During this process of inhaling air from the outside into the body, the practitioner should close all the so-called ‘doors’ or exit points in the body through which the wind could escape⁴.

The practitioner should sit ram-rod straight, with the spinal cord, the neck and the head in a straight line, and the chest fully expanded. While in this position, he should allow the inhaled wind to be retained in the body and spread through it. That is, the inhaled rejuvenating air is allowed to permeate throughout the body and get absorbed by the tissues. [This stage of Pranayam is called ‘Kumbhak’ or filling the pot. It is a metaphoric way of saying that the pot-like body is filled with fresh air after it is been emptied of stale air laden with all the gaseous impurities present in the body when it was exhaled earlier. This is done to oxidize every tissue and cell inside the body with fresh oxygen and energy, thereby stoking the inherent fire element present in these tissues and revitalizing them with new and fresh energy. It is like removing the covering ash from the

pit of the sacrificial fire and blowing fresh air into the ambers lying underneath the ash to re-kindle the latent fire which had become dormant. This fire then jumps into life and burns with new vigour, thereby infusing new life into the body of the practitioner.]

Finally, when the body has sufficiently absorbed fresh oxygen present in the inhaled air and all the tissues and cells freshly revitalized by it, the different toxins and other impurities present in these tissues and cells are then expelled as noxious gases from them and collected by the residual air which has now become polluted and needs to be expelled from the body. This is done by exhaling it through the nostrils slowly in the reverse process. [This reverse process is called 'Rechak'.] (2-5).

[Note—**Pranyam* is central to Yoga practices and all the Upanishads dealing with Yoga deal with it in one or the other context. Refer to Sam Veda's Yog Chudamani and Jabal Darshan, Shukla Yajur Veda's Trishikihi Brahmin, and Krishna Yajur Veda's Amrit Naad, Yog Tattva, Dhayan Bindu and Tejo Bindu Upanishads.

¹The proper sitting postures or *Aasans* for doing Yoga (meditation and contemplation) and practicing Pranayam (breath control) have been described in Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 19. The complete process of Pranayam is dealt with in this Upanishad in substantial detail.

²In other words, he should prevent his thoughts and emotions from spreading out into the world of material sense objects like the tentacles of an octopus, and then get entangled in them and remain entangled. Then he should inhale the outside air representing the cosmic life-giving wind element metaphorically called the Atma because it infuses a fresh lease of life into the otherwise inane and inert gross body of the aspirant. [In other words, inhaling air is like blowing fresh air into the furnace of life burning inside the body of the aspirant and kindling the 'fire of life' which has become weak without proper ventilation. Inhaling air or the wind element is like giving the Atma, which is pure consciousness and the true identity of the aspirant, a fresh lease of life by stoking the latent 'fire element' which keeps it energised.

The 'inhalation of fresh air' is a metaphoric way of saying that the spiritual aspirant imbibes eclectic virtues and qualities that are exemplarily auspicious and noble by remaining ever vigilant and conscious towards what is right and what is not. This acceptance of good and noble from the outside world is equivalent to 'breathing in fresh air or the Purak' phase of Pranayam. Now, when good ideas and virtues enter the inner self of the aspirant and are retained by him instead of just letting them pass off as a transient change then they are bound to have a permanent positive effect on his overall personality, mentality and temperament. This is equivalent to the 'holding of breath or the Kumbhak' phase of Pranayam. It is obvious that when good and positive virtues are in the ascendant the bad and negative ones would be on the decline; when fresh air enters a closed room the stale air is pushed out. This is equivalent to 'exhaling of breath or the Rechak' phase of Pranayam.]

³The word OM has three basic letters, viz. A, U and M. Therefore, pronouncing the *twelve Matras of OM* would here mean that the word is said four times—3 Matras x 4 times = 12 Matras. Refer also Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse nos. 24 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

⁴The symbolic *doors* of the body are the following—two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, one urethra and one Brahm Randhra (the hair-like slit on the top of the head).]

The *Amrit Naad Upanishad*, verse no. 7-8, 10-14, 21-22 describes the term *Pranayam* as follows—

“Verse no. 7 = Even as the impurities of precious minerals and rare elements extracted from mining of mountains are purified by heating them in the fire of a furnace, all the ignominious impurities and faults that are brought in by the various sense organs of perceptions are burnt when one practices holding of the various vital winds called Prans by the process of Pranayam inside the body. These impurities and faults impinge upon the purity of the soul and create a tainting layer of worldly delusions and their attendant problems around the otherwise glorious Atma, thereby suppressing its natural divinity and sublime glow. [This is like the case of a film of dust covering the glass enclosing the flame of the lantern. The light of the flame appears to be dull and gloomy. When this glass is cleaned, the light shines ever so brilliantly.] (7).

[Note—Metals are extracted by heating their ores in a furnace. This intense heating removes the impurity and brings out the purity of the metal to the fore. Similarly, the various taints that surround the Atma are removed by subjecting it to the rigors of spiritual discipline.

The inputs from the world create *Vasanas*, i.e. desires and passions to enjoy the material pleasures of the world, and these transform into *Vrittis*, i.e. natural habits and inclinations of the aspirant. The *Vrittis* tend to swerve the aspirant away from the path of spiritualism because it is a difficult path, and instead bend it to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the world and gratification of the senses because it is not only easy but most alluring at the same time. Slowly and over time, these faults form a thick crust over the Atma much like scum floating on the surface of the crystal clear water of the lake, thereby suffocating the healthy and vibrant aquatic life that originally flourished in this lake before it got polluted. The *Vasanas* and *Vrittis* suppress the inherently divine glow emanating from this self-illuminated ‘gem’ called the Atma. The Atma then appears to be tainted and faulty, and not in its pristine pure form.]

“Verse no. 8 = Pranayam should be employed by the spiritual aspirant to reduce to ashes, i.e. to destroy and eliminate the various faults and impurities that have entered via the path of sense perceptions of the body¹. Dharna should be employed by him to similarly reduce to ashes the various sins and evil tendencies of the various organs of the body². Pratyahar should be employed to control the various organs of the body, including the mind, and divert them towards contemplating upon the numerous virtues and divine glories of the supreme transcendental Brahm residing as the soul or the Atma of the aspirant on the one hand, and as revealed in the form of the vast creation on the other hand³ (8).

[Note—¹Verse no. 7 has already shown how *Pranayam* helps the aspirant to burn the various faults that enter the mind along with the different perceptions that the mind constantly receives from the external world. For example, the mind is subjected to a constant bombardment of information in the visual spectrum which it calls ‘sight’. Now, all that is seen is not always righteous, noble and auspicious, for more often than not it is just the opposite, creating a negative impact upon the mind and its sub-conscious, and the consequence corrupting of the Atma because the Atma relies upon the instrument of the mind and intellect to perceive the world in which it lives. The Atma has no means to directly perceive the world; it has to do so through the mind-intellect apparatus called the subtle body, and the organs of perception called the gross body. If any one of them is corrupted or tainted, the Atma is given a negative feedback, and it is no fault of the Atma if it *then* wrongly perceives the world. The fault is of the mind-intellect because it is the minister appointed by the Atma to sieve through the overwhelming wave of information from the outside world and let only the clean information to reach it. But if the mind-

intellect apparatus is not itself properly maintained, then the consequences may be fatal for the Atma.

That is why essentially this Upanishad stresses on these six paths of Yoga which help the aspirant to filter out all rubbish from the world and let in only the divine nectar represented by auspicious, righteous, noble and virtuous ideas and perceptions to reach the taintless and faultless Atma so that its inherent natural beauty and divinity are not compromised.

²*Dharna* is having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path. This helps the aspirant to remain firm in it and prevent any chances of his faltering from it. This firmness helps the body to overcome temptations of the world and the natural affinity of the body and mind to fall prey to them.

³*Pratyahar* is control of the mind and body, and therefore it goes hand in hand with the other two methods. It must be noted that all limbs of Yoga mentioned here have no separate existence, and they must be used in a coordinated manner, just like the different organs of the body, both the external and the internal, function in a coordinate manner to enable the man to lead a normal life. In order to succeed in any enterprise, all the units have to function in a judicious manner and mix prudence with wisdom. When one constantly thinks about good things, it is but natural that it has a positive psychological effect on the mind, and helps it to become noble and wise in the long term.]

“Verse no. 10 = Pranayam has three phases. While contemplating upon the divine and holy form of the Supreme Being (represented by the ethereal word OM—refer verse no. 1), one should keep the inhaled wind or breath inside the body for a given period of time during the phase called ‘Kumbhak’ (meaning a ‘pot or pitcher’, and here implying holding the wind like filling a pot or pitcher with air). Thereafter, it should be slowly exhaled or let out in the second phase called ‘Rechak’ (literally meaning cleaning or purging, because when the wind is let out of the body it takes along with it all the gaseous impurities and toxins that have accumulated inside it). The final and third phase is called ‘Purak’ (literally meaning to fill or compensate for the loss of wind during exhalation) in which wind is inhaled to fill the body, leading once again to the Kumbhak stage (10).

“Verse no. 11 = One cycle of Pranayam (Kumbhak, Rechak and Purak) is said to be complete when the practitioner mentally repeats the seven Vyahritis¹ and the full Gayatri Mantra² three times during each phase. [This indirectly determines the time taken for each phase.] (11).

[Note—¹The *Vyahritis* are the following primary words pronounced by Brahma the creator at the time of initiation of creation—OM Bhuha, OM Bhuvaha, OM Swaha, OM Maha, OM Janaha, OM Tapaha, and OM Satyam. Please refer to note of verse no. 4 above.

²The *Gayatri Mantra* has two versions which are presented here. (a) According to one version, it is based on the typical Gayatri Chanda which is a poetical composition consisting of three stanzas or lines each having eight letters or syllables. The total number of letters or syllables is thus twenty four. The Gayatri extolled by this Upanishad is the one strictly conforming to this rule, while the usual and commonly known Gayatri Mantra has four steps or stanzas and is called Anushtup Chanda.

In Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14, the Gayatri of three steps is extolled as the one which is superior to other forms of the Gayatri Mantra having four steps because this three-stepped Mantra is synonymous with Pran, i.e. it is the life or the essence of all that exists.

The Gayatri Mantra having three lines is the following—“Tatsaviturvarnyam Dhimahi Dhiyo Yo Naha Prachodayat”. The fourth line honours and glorifies this Gayatri as a manifestation of the Sun God, and as brilliant and splendid as it. It is--“Paro Rajase Savadoma”. Since the Sun is a visible manifestation of the supreme Brahm who is the Transcendental Consciousness of the entire creation at the macro level, having the Atma resident in the bosom of the individual creature as its micro level counterpart and Pran as its subtle manifestation, the Gayatri Mantra is in honour of the supreme Authority of creation, i.e. Brahm.

(b) The other version is based on the ‘Anushtup Chanda’ pattern. It is--‘OM BHURBHUVAHA SVAHA¹, TATSAVIURVARENYAM², BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAHİ³, DHIYO YO NAH PRACODAYAT⁴’. It means ‘OM is the supreme, transcendental Brahm. He is the lord of creation of the terrestrial, the celestial and heavenly worlds. I offer my oblations to you. That Brahm is luminous like the sun. He is excellent, the best, the most exalted, a destroyer of sins, and a divine entity. May he imbibe, infuse and inspire our intellect with wisdom and enlightenment so that we are purified and move on the righteous and noble path’. The four phrases of the Gayatri Mantra are clearly marked by small numerals in this Mantra. This Mantra appears in the Rig Veda (3/62/10), the Sam Veda (1462), and Yajur Veda (3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/6).

The famous Mantra is dedicated to the Sun God who is a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm. It is this Mantra—which is a group of ethereal words having profound spiritual value and metaphysical importance. It is called Gayatri because it gave protection to the Pran--Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14, verse no. 4. It has been accepted as a manifestation of Pran in Shatpath Brahmin, 1/3/5/15, while it is praised as having the potentials of Agni (fire) present in the faculty of speech known as Vak in Taittariya Sanhita, 3/2/9/3, as Tej (energy) in Shatpath Brahmin, 1/8/2/13, and as Brahm (the supreme transcendental consciousness) in Maitri Brahmin, 4/3/1. According to the Purans (mythological histories of the Hindus), the Gayatri has been praised having manifested in the form of the Trinity Gods—Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder--Skanda Puran, Kashi Khand, Purva, 4/9/58. Whatever that exists is a revelation of Gayatri because it is a manifestation of Brahm—Chandogya Upanishad, 3/12/1. In fact this whole earth that gives refuge to all the life forms in this world is a manifestation of Gayatri-- Chandogya Upanishad, 3/12/2. By worshipping it, a person is blessed with worldly assets such as abundant livestock and flourishing family, a long, healthy and active life, wealth and fortunes, good name and fame, as well as spiritual attainment in the form of Brahm realisation—Atharva Veda, 19/71/1.

The Gayatri Mantra has been expounded and elucidated upon in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14 and other Upanishads, such as the Savitri Upanishad which is entirely dedicated to it, the Maitrayanyu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 7, and the Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 3, Section 12, verse nos. 1-9 belonging to the Sam Veda tradition. Besides these, the Gayatri Upanishad appears as eight assorted verses or Kandikas numbering 31-38 of the Gopath Brahmin belonging to the Atharva Veda.

It has been said in the scriptures that Brahmins, the highest class amongst the humans and who are regarded as the most learned and wise amongst them, were born from Gayatri, thereby drawing a parallel between the highest stature and exalted standing of Brahmins amongst the creatures and the Gayatri amongst the hymns. It is pertinent to note here by the way that Kshatriyas, the warrior class, were born from the Chanda known as Trishtup, and Vaishya, the trading class, from the Chanda known as Jagati. In other words, the divine and eclectic powers encrypted in the Trishtup Chanda revealed themselves as the Kshatriya, and those of the Jagati as the Vaishya. The Trishtup Chanda has four lines each having eleven letters or syllables, totaling forty four letters or

syllables in all, while the Jagati Chanda has six lines with eight letters or syllables each, totaling to forty eight letters or syllables.]

“Verse no. 12 = The sign of properly doing Rechak phase of Pranayam is that the wind or breath is exhaled fully from the body into the outer space or sky through the nostrils. No trace of wind is to remain inside the body at all. During this phase, the practitioner should be absolutely in a mentally neutral state of existence so that there are no thoughts of any kind impinging upon his consciousness (12).

“Verse no. 13 = The sign of properly doing Purak phase of Pranayam is that the wind or breath is slowly and gradually inhaled inside the body through the nostrils (with the mouth shut tightly) just like one draws liquid into the mouth by sucking it up through a long straw (13).

“Verse no. 14 = The sign of properly doing Kumbhak phase of Pranayam is to remain absolutely immobile and retaining the wind inside the body such that no part of it is able to escape or leak from it through any aperture, such as the nostril or mouth or anus (14).

[Note—The three phases of Pranayam and the entire process to successfully do it have been described in great detail in the following Upanishads—Trishikhi Brahmin of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 2, verse nos. 24-158; Yogchudamani Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition; and in Yog Kundali, Canto 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda.]

“Verse no. 21 = This monosyllable ‘word’ is OM, the ethereal sound representing the eternal, imperishable and infinite supreme transcendental Brahm.

OM is also to be repeated and contemplated upon while gradually exhaling breath during the ‘Rechak’ phase of Pranayam.

In this way, the spiritual aspirant should repeatedly invoke this divine ethereal Mantra OM and do Pranayam to cleanse his mind and free it from all impurities and faults pertaining to this world. [Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 14.] (21).

“Verse no. 22 = The practitioner of Yoga should cleanse the mind (and body) of all impurities by diligent practice of Pranayam. He should employ this cleansed mind to focus on the finer aspects of the ethereal word OM by contemplating upon each of its five elementary sounds (A, U, M, ‘Anuswar’ or dot ·, and the crescent shaped ‘Naad’ (º)) placed on the symbol for the word OM. The final shape of the word OM is— ॐ .

While thus meditating upon OM, he should contemplate upon the different divine aspects of each of these syllables, their divine qualities and eclectic attributes, as well as their patron Gods or deities¹.

He should take the precaution that this type of practice of holding of the breath while repeating OM should not exceed the prescribed limits. There are three cycles in doing Pranayam with the help of OM.

The first is called ‘Sthul Matra’ or crude or coarse form of Pranayam. This involves eighty cycles of inhaling breath, retaining it and then expelling it while saying OM once each time. The second is called ‘Ati Sthul Matra’ or the finer or more refined

form of Pranayam whereby the breath is held inside the body during which OM is repeated eighty times. And finally, the third is called ‘Sthulaati-sthul’ or the best and finest form of Pranayam wherein the second type is repeated eighty times in succession. It is said that more than that in one session is not advisable.

This cycle of Pranayam is to be done four times a day—at dawn, at noon, evening and night (22).

[Note—¹The patron deities of these five syllables of OM are the following—Vishnu patronises the letter ‘A’, Brahma the letter ‘U’, Shiva the letter ‘M’, the cosmic Shakti or the energy at the core of creation and its regulation is represented by ‘Dot’, and the supreme transcendental Brahm himself is indicated by the cosmic Naad represented by the symbol of the crescent moon on the top of the symbol of OM. Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 14.]”

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 5, verse no. 58, interprets the three phases of *Pranayam*, i.e. Purak, Kumbhak and Rechak in metaphysical terms as follows—“All the external sense objects of this material world are equivalent to the Rechak (exhalation; elimination) phase of Pranayam. Acceptance of knowledge and wisdom contained in the scriptures is equivalent to the Purak (inhalation) phase of Pranayam. The Khumbhak (holding of breath inside the body between the Purak and Rechak) is equivalent to meditating and contemplating upon the pure consciousness residing inside one’s own bosom as one’s Atma or ‘self’ (58).”

The *Brahm Vidya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 75 describes the ‘Vajra Pranayam’. To quote—“The aspirant ascetic should practice the most potent form of breath control exercise called ‘Vajra Pranyam’ (literally meaning the Pranayam which has the potentials and powers that are equivalent in their effect to the invincible and strong weapon of Indra, the king of Gods, called Vajra; hence this form of Pranayam is infallible) by closing all the so-called nine doors¹ of the body (to ensure that the vital winds finds no way to escape and can be focused on the activation of the Kundalini and the Sushumna Naadi)². He should have a cheerful mind and sit in a comfortable position. That is, there should be no element of stress and discomfort, as it would cause hindrance in concentration and act as a distraction for the mind and the body. With this preparation, the ascetic should literally ride the Pawan or the wind/air element³ (75).

[Note—¹The symbolic nine doors of the body are the following—two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, and one urethra. Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, 3/18.

²As has been envisioned in the previous verses, there is lot of pressure needed to be built to push the subtle divine energy from the bottom of the spine where the Kundalini is located right up to the top of the head where the Trikoot and Brahm Randhra are located, and more than that is the effort needed to rupture the various knots called the Granthis. If there is any leak in the body, the vital air would not be able to develop sufficient pressure to accomplish this great task. More importantly from the metaphysical point of view, the closing of the nine openings of the body is to emphasise the fact that total self-control is needed if one were to succeed in one’s spiritual efforts. Half hearted and less than complete commitment would be like a leaking balloon.

³In other words, he would feel as light as someone floating in air or riding an air vehicle. The body will feel light and lose its grossness much like a balloon filled with hot air. Since the air inside is trapped because of closure of all exit points, it gets heated up

and consequentially become lighter and tends to move up inside the body. This helps to levitate the body.]”

The holistic way of doing Pranayam has been described in *Annapurna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse no. 25-27 as follows—

“Verse no. 25 = The Pran (life-factors in the creature’s body; literally referring to the vital winds, especially the breath) is an entity that is constantly on the move. It remains perpetually pulsating in the creature, and never ceases to move. Indeed, this Pran is dynamism of Brahm in practical terms; it represents the dynamic energy of Brahm in practice.

This Pran moves in and out of the body, and has a natural tendency of rising high and up. [This observation specifically indicates that the term ‘Pran’ applies to the ‘breath’ because it is the breath that moves in and out of the body, and also has a natural tendency of ‘going up’ through the throat, as well as coming ‘in’ and moving ‘out’ through the nose.] (25).

“Verse no. 26 = Similarly, the Apaana Vayu is also a manifestation of the dynamism of Brahm. It too, like the Pran, is constantly on the move, moving in and out of the body. [The term ‘Apaana’ refers to the vital wind that moves down in the body—the wind that moves in the intestines and helps the food to be digested and expelled out of the body; it is mostly located in the lower part of the body below the throat.] (26).

[Note—When verse nos. 25 and 26 are read together in the context of what has been said earlier in verse nos. 19-21, and 24 of this Upanishad, the meaning assumes a different connotation. The Pran wind would refer to those people who are good, wise, educated, of high birth and occupy a high standing in society, and are friendly as well as close to the person to whom this Upanishad is being preached, while the Apaana wind would refer to those persons who are just the opposite. The similarity between the two situations is marked and obvious. The principle that both the Pran and Apaana are manifestations of the same Brahm’s dynamic powers on display would naturally also apply to the two types of people in the world. This is expected in the light of the fact that ‘everything and everyone is Brahm, and nothing but Brahm in this creation’ as affirmed earlier in verse nos. 19-21.]

“Verse no. 27 = This eclectic way of thinking is the best way of doing Pranayam constantly and consistently, even while one sleeps, from the metaphysical perspective.

Hence, those who know how Pranayam should be done in a holistic and comprehensive manner are duly rewarded by its auspicious and good effects.

[Pranayam is a form of Yoga exercise wherein the practitioner endeavours to control and harness the power of the breath and the other winds present inside the body for achieving his spiritual objectives. The import of this verse is tremendous—if one limits his Pranayam to mere physical exercises that can only be done for a limited time and that only when he is awake, then obviously their good effects would be also limited in scope. But if one develops the holistic and philosophically evolved form of doing Pranayam as described in verse nos. 25-26, then the same can have a profound effect on the spiritual aspirant’s spiritual progress in life. If limited Pranayam can have great practical benefits in the form of good health and rejuvenated spirit, giving peace and bliss to the practitioner, then one can well imagine the heightened benefits if this Pranayam become perpetual and steady. The peace, bliss and tranquility that are derived by this

perpetual and steady mode of Pranayam done with acquisition of truthful wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation from the metaphysical perspective would be truly liberating and delivering for the creature.] (27).

The *period or duration* for which Pranayam should be done have been enumerated in Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 5, verse nos. 3-4; Canto 1, section 7, verse no. 2. Now let us examine them—

“Canto 1, section 5, verse nos. 3-4 = This exercise of Pranayam should be continuously practiced for a period of forty-three days, or for three, four or seven months, or for one full year.

It should be done thrice daily during observation of the sacrament of ‘Sandhya’—i.e. at dawn, at noon, and at dusk. During each cycle, Pranayam should be done three, four or six times. [In other words, Pranayam is done thrice daily, and each time it is done three times, or four times, or six times.]

This practice helps to clean and purify the Naadis. [That is, Pranayam helps to de-clog the congested Naadis in the body and helps in easy flow of Pran forces in them. This results in re-energizing the worn-out tissues of the body, and re-activates its dormant vitality. In other words, the body is rejuvenated.]

The benefits are immense—the body feels light, the face becomes radiant and glows, and the internal fire element is revived (and this shows in the form of renewed vigour, vitality, strength and energy as well as restored appetite). From the spiritual perspective, the practitioner is able to hear the Naad (as described in verse no. 2 above in the context of Kumbhak) (3-4).

“Canto 1, section 7, verse no. 2 = Kumbhak should be practiced four times during the course of a day—in the morning (dawn), at noon, in the evening (dusk) and at midnight. The time taken for Kumbhak should be around eighty Matras (roughly eighty seconds)¹ (2).

[Note—¹Compare with verse no. 3-4, section 5, and verse no. 5, section 6 of this Canto no.1. It should be understood that the varying figures as to the number of Matras or the duration for which the various phases of Pranayam ought to be done is to indicate that there is no rigid rule which is inviolable and which must be strictly adhered to, but one should adjust his timing as per his convenience and aptitude for Yoga. This fact has been expressly endorsed in verse no. 7 of section 7 of this Canto 1. As a general rule, the timing for the Purak, the Kumbhak and the Rechak phases follow the following ratio—1:1:1; or 1:2:1; or 1:4:2; or 1:2:3.]”

(20) (iv) (c) Dharna—Verse nos. 16 of the *Amrit Naad Upanishad* describes the term *Dharna* as follows—“A wise man is one who understands the fact that the mind is the root cause of all types of ‘Sankalps’, i.e. all volitions and yearnings, all desires and aspirations, all vows and promises, all hopes and expectations that a man has or makes. So in order to overcome this hurdle and exercise control over the mind, he should diligently merge it with his intellect and the discriminating consciousness so that the mind is put under tight leash. It is because the intelligent Atma or consciousness knows that the world is delusory and misleading, and all the things with which it attempts to tempt the mind are perishable and illusionary. Following this trail would ultimately lead

to endless miseries and perpetual restlessness for the mind much like running after a mirage in the desert in search of the illusive water. When this notion becomes firmly engrained in the aspirant's mind and it is put under the care of the wise and erudite intellect working under the guidance of the discriminatory Atma, it is called 'Dharna' (16)."

(20) (iv) (d) Tarka and Samadhi—Verse nos. 17 of the *Amrit Naad Upanishad* describes the term *Tarka* and *Samadhi* as follows—"Intelligently consulting and interpreting the scriptures and understanding their tenets and doctrines with a rational and logical mind-intellect apparatus, employing the method of discussing and debating them with a positive attitude so that all confusions and doubts are dispelled and the empirical 'truth' is grasped, is called 'Tarka'.

The final state when the aspirant arrives at the ultimate Truth and when nothing remains to be searched anymore because the spiritual citadel has been reached, then this state is known as 'Samadhi'. [It is marked by exemplary steadiness and fortitude.] (17)."

(20) (v) Samadhi—There are a number of Upanishads that describe Samadhi exclusively. Let us see some of them here.

(20) (v) (a) According to *Paingalo-panishad*, canto 3, verse no. 4-5 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Samadhi has been described in the following terms—

"Verse no. 4 = When the intellect and mind rids themselves of their restless nature, when the tendency of the Chitta (the sub-conscious mind) become steady and focused on the object of contemplation and meditation just like the light of a lamp remains un-flickering and steady in the absence of wind, then that state is called Samadhi (4).

"Verse no. 5 = In that state of Samadhi, the various Vrittis (inherent tendencies of a creature), which are basically imaginations of the Atma based on the powers of memory of the mind, first appear and then gradually disappear. Countless deeds done by the creature in as many lives of the past, and their accumulated effects are burnt or annihilated during this state. [This is because the mind ceases to function, and the memory is a function of the mind. Once the memory is defunct, the creature sincerely does not remember its past, and as such it does not worry about what unfulfilled tasks are left for it to do in the present, and neither does it worry about the impending punishments and misfortunes that howl at him due to its past misdeeds. This situation gives the creature peace of heart and soul.]

In due course of time, when diligent practice makes the seeker mature in his spiritual pursuits, he experiences a spray of bliss showering upon him like rain water. That is why those who are expert in practicing Samadhi call it 'Dharma Megh', or the rain of righteous and auspicious feeling or being.

It is due to the good effects of Samadhi that all the bad effects of the various Vasanas (worldly desires, passions, yearnings and greed) are annihilated. All types of effects of deeds—whether good or bad—are completely destroyed from their roots. [That is, the seeker becomes neutral; he reverts back to his original status that existed before he had allowed himself to get trapped in the web of deeds by erroneously thinking that 'he' was the doer of those deeds, and therefore was entitled to enjoy their fruits. He forgets that his true self is the Atma and not the body that was doing any deed. This fallacious

thinking is at the root of all his worldly problems. All creature have a natural affinity for comfort zones and they seek things that give them pleasure, happiness and joy of the senses. That is the primary reason why the creature had turned towards this material world in the first place. But now during the state of Samadhi, he finds that the bliss which he gets here is more enduring and of a higher quality than the one he got from remaining involved with the world. This is because the happiness got out from the world had its own set of problems besides being temporary, while the bliss that is got during Samadhi gives a sooth massage to the Atma and provides for a long lasting and enduring bliss. Having tasted something better, the creature would lose all interests in the world and its illusive charms. In other words, his Vasanas would be trounced.]”

(20) (v) (b) According to the *Varaaha Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 2, verse no. 75, Samadhi is described as follows—“Just like a lump of salt placed in water gets dissolved in it and becomes indistinguishable from water, the merger of the Atma (the pure consciousness) and the Mana (the mind) is called the state of Samadhi (the trance-like transcendental state of existence when the man is unaware of his surroundings, including his own body) (75).”

According to *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 75, Samadhi is that stage when the Mana (mind) and Atma (pure conscious soul) coalesce and merge with one another; they become one with each other. Mana and Atma are independent of each other ordinarily, but during Samadhi they lose their separate existence and the Mana virtually ceases to have its independent existence, and since it acquires oneness with the Atma, it also acquires the blissful and contented virtues of the latter. The Atma had been using the Mana as its instrument for interacting with the outside world, and when the Mana becomes one with the Atma this interaction ceases. In other words, the man in Samadhi is freed from the disturbances created by the external world to his peace and therefore he is perpetually in a state of bliss, happiness and contentedness.

(20) (v) (c) The *Tejobindu Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 37-42 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition elaborately describes Samadhi in these terms:—

“Verse no. 37—The last step in spiritual endeavour is the eclectic and transcendental state of ‘Samadhi’. It is the apex of the pyramidal structure of all types of spiritual pursuits because it represents that perpetual state of supreme blissfulness obtained by complete enlightenment that comes with self-realisation and Brahm-realisation that transcends all other forms of mystical achievements.

When all the misconceptions, taints, deformations and defects of the mind and heart that have their origin in delusions and ignorance about the reality are eliminated, when they are thoroughly cleansed of all impure thoughts and made immune to all sorts of distractions and corrupting influences that ordinarily taint the creature’s immaculate ‘self’, and when this makes him steady, sincere and diligent in his spiritual pursuit, it is only then that the excellent notion of ‘I am Brahm personified’ dawns on the spiritual horizon of any spiritual aspirant. [In all other cases, if a person makes this statement, he is, in all probability, being deceitful and untruthful.]

Samadhi is that state of existence when all other thoughts are sincerely banished from the mind for good except the eclectic and sublime thought of ‘I am Brahm

personified¹. This eclectic thought takes firm hold and sweeps away all other thoughts from the spiritual aspirant's mind and heart for good (37).

[Note--¹Here, the word 'I' refers to the pure conscious Atma residing in the subtle heart of the spiritually enlightened person. This individual Atma of the creature is a microcosmic counterpart of the all-pervading, supreme, transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. This Brahm has manifested itself in the form of the visible world consisting of animate creatures as well as inanimate things, and therefore all that exists is nothing but Brahm, including the person who makes this solemn statement 'I am Brahm personified'. Of course, as it is obvious here, if this statement comes from a convinced heart in a convincing manner, it is indeed a realisation of the great truth by such a man, and therefore he is indeed enlightened. Otherwise, such a statement is unwarranted and uncalled for, and it is full of deceit and like cheating one's own self as well as all the others around.

Since the aim of all spiritual pursuit is to realise this supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm, the ultimate Truth and Reality in creation, so when a person has sincerely made this statement without any trace of deceit and doubt that 'I am Brahm personified', it is deemed that he has realised that final goal of all spiritual endeavours, i.e. he has come to terms with the great doctrine of the Vedas that the Supreme Being known as Brahm is not somewhere high up in the sky but immediately here and even so close to the person that the person and Brahm are indistinguishable from one another. In other words, the enlightened person becomes as holy and divine as the cosmic Divinity itself.

Samadhi is the stage in spiritual efforts when the aspirant has transcended other stages in the spiritual hierarchy and reached a trance like state of existence marked by perpetual blissfulness obtained when one has tasted the nectar of eternity, beatitude and felicity springing forth from the pure conscious Atma, the true 'self' of the spiritual aspirant, which in turn is a personification of the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm.]

“Verse no. 38—The eclectic sense of blissfulness, the perpetual state of beatitude and felicity obtained during Samadhi is eternal, natural, genuine, of a high quality, effusive and effervescent in nature, while all other types of happiness and joys are false, artificial and transient.

Constant practice of Samadhi and other spiritual methods (as enumerated in this Upanishad) makes an ascetic perfect in his spiritual achievements, and he ultimately attains his goal of Brahm and 'self' realisation. He effectively becomes a personification of the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in true sense of the word. This divine enlightenment makes him spiritually liberated and delivered; he attains emancipation and salvation for his soul even while he is still alive in this world and has a physical body (38).

[Note—In other words, when he has become enlightened and self-realised, it does not matter to him whether or not 'he' (i.e. his 'true self', the pure conscious Atma, the soul, the divine Spirit present in his body) has a physical body or not, for he had totally disassociated himself from the latter and remains in a complete detached state of mind. It does not matter to him whether or not his body suffers from any disease for instance, whether or not the body is comfortable or in discomfort, and so on and so forth.]

“Verse no. 39—When he has reached this exalted state of existence as obtained during Samadhi, he does not need the help of any other means in his spiritual progress any

further. He has become the 'attained one', the 'realised one', 'the enlightened one'. Such a person is deemed to be a king amongst ascetics and spiritual aspirants. He has obtained mystical powers and potentials which are supernatural.

He becomes totally submerged and soaked in the thoughts of Brahm. All his sense perceptions, his mind and heart, as well as his faculty of speech become devoted to Brahm; they are centered around Brahm; Brahm becomes the pivot around which his entire being, his whole existence revolves.

This unique state of existence in which nothing exists and nothing else matters for him but Brahm makes such a devoted ascetic firmly established in the truthful form of Brahm realisation, i.e. he becomes a living embodiment of the glories and divinity of Brahm (39).

“Verse no. 40-41—As soon as the ascetic reaches the state of Samadhi, numerous problems and hurdles suddenly present themselves before him, trying to deviate him from his path and demote him from his spiritual achievements. He is often enmeshed in their web and falls from his chosen path.

Some of these spiritual obstacles are the following—to deviate and waver from the chosen path to research the truth of Brahm, i.e. the path of Brahm-realisation, to be overcome with lethargy, indolence and inertia, to have a desire and longing to gratify the sense organs and enjoy the objects of these sense organs and their attendant pleasures and comforts, to have worldly passions, lust and yearnings, and be infatuated with the objects that arouse such emotions (40), to be engulfed in the darkness of ignorance and delusions causing bewilderment and confusions in the absence of light of truthful knowledge and erudition about the reality and its accompanying enlightenment and wisdom, to be deterred by efforts made during meditation which cause so much exertion that one begins to sweat, to be so much mentally distracted that it is difficult to fix attention on the chosen goal, etc.

A wise and erudite aspirant of spiritualism should special guard against these pitfalls and remain wary of them. He should keep them at bay (41) [40-41.]

“Verse no. 42— ‘One becomes what one thinks about constantly’—this is an established adage. So when one begins to remain indifferent to and immune from all emotions and thoughts other than that of Brahm, when one inculcates the habit of remaining in a state of perpetual indifference and non-involvement in anything pertaining to this existence other than the thoughts of Brahm, it is natural that gradually the mind and its natural tendencies withdraw from everything else and become concentrated on this one single point, the thoughts of Brahm.

Hence, the true state of Samadhi, its true accomplishment and its real consummation is when the ascetic begins to think that Brahm is present as his own self as affirmed and asserted by the great saying of the Vedas, i.e. ‘I am Brahm’. When this happens, the ascetic has come full circle. This is the holistic and all-inclusive view and philosophy pertaining to Brahm. The ascetic must practice this state of fulsome realisation of Brahm during his Samadhi (42).”

(20) (v) (d) The *Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 60-65 describe Samadhi. To quote—“Verse no. 60 = The spiritual aspirant should remain

in a state of perpetual Samadhi, both internally as well as externally. [That is, he should remain in a virtual state of meditation and be focused on the Truth and Reality at all times. The state of Samadhi the state when the man is totally oblivious of the body and the surrounding world, and instead remains submerged in the bliss obtained by self-realisation and being in constant communion with the consciousness. Such a man would lead an ordinary life but remain completely detached at the mental and intellectual level from all things and deeds done by the body.]

The heart (representing the true ‘self’ or the consciousness known as the Atma because the latter is said to reside in the cave-like subtle sky of the heart) is involved in two types of Samadhi—(a) Savikalpa (one having more than one alternatives or versions) and (b) Nirvakalpa (that which is one of its kind and has no alternatives or versions) (60).

“Verse no. 61-65 = The Savikalpa Samadhi is of two types—(a) one Samadhi that is literally pierced or disturbed or deflected or impinged upon by the numerous attractive sights of the world that one sees due to one’s natural instincts and desires to see pleasant and endearing objects of the world that seem attractive and enticing for the senses, and (b) one Samadhi that is disturbed by various sounds and words that one hears in this world.

To get rid of the disturbance, hindrance and deflections caused to Samadhi by the sights of the physical world can be overcome by meditating and contemplating thus—‘These sights of the visible and gross world that disturb Samadhi are created by the inborn Kaam (worldly desires, passions and yearnings for the visible and gross sense objects of the world) that a creature has, whereas the Atma is pure consciousness and expected to be only a mere neutral witness to their existence, without having any desire to obtain them or getting involved with them or attracted towards them.’ [When this erudition develops, the man would neglect the visible attractions of the world and remain focused on his Samadhi.]

Similarly, the disturbance caused to Samadhi by various sounds is taken care of by meditating and contemplating thus—‘I do not have any company with whom to talk (i.e. I live alone in a secluded place, in absolute serenity and calmness). I am a personification of the virtues of truth, consciousness and bliss. I am self-illuminated. I am non-dual, one, unparalleled, unique, immutable and indivisible.’ [That is, I am an ethereal divine entity that neither hears anything nor speaks anything.]

A spiritual aspirant who neglects the visible world and its noises, and instead remains submerged in the thoughts of the Atma, the consciousness and the truth, he is said to be in a state of ‘Nirvakalpa Samadhi’. His condition is stable, steady and unwavering like the steadily burning, un-flickering and erect flame of a lighted oil lamp placed at a place where there is no movement in air whatsoever.

These are the two types Samadhis called Savikalpa and Nirvakalpa that have their seat in the heart, i.e. they are internal Samadhis and are done with the help of the inner thoughts of the ascetic.

In the same way, when a man focuses his attention on some object in the external world, his mind becomes fixed on it and he thinks of nothing else except it. This is the external state of Samadhi.

This external Samadhi again can be classified as follows—(a) The one that depends upon the awareness of the ‘seer’ and the ‘seen’. [For example, ‘I’ am or ‘he’ is

seeing that 'animal' or 'tree']. (b) The separation of the external gross physical form and name of each thing that is seen from its essential form or fundamental principle that is present in it, i.e. to see the same consciousness prevailing in each unit of living world. [For example, to see the same consciousness as being present in a horse and an elephant, or in a boy and a girl. If this is extended further to the physical world, a truly wise man would see the element 'water' in everything liquid or fluid, such as milk and fruit juice which have different names and external forms but are nevertheless 'liquid or fluid', and liquidity and fluidity cannot come without water being present in them]. (c) The uniformity and universality of vision when one sees the same cosmic consciousness in everything in the external world. In this higher state of awareness, the ascetic does not even see any external forms and knows no names except the fact that the same cosmic Consciousness or the supreme transcendental Brahm is present everywhere. In other words, in the higher stages of Samadhi the spiritual aspirant is firmly rooted in the eclectic concept of 'non-duality' which becomes a universal phenomenon for him. There is no such thing as 'that' and 'this' anymore.

The last stage creates a state of existence when there are no perplexities and confusions, when there are no distractions, deflections and disturbances. It is like the state of complete shock when one becomes dumbfounded, dumbstruck, non-responsive and stunned into non-activity. [Since at a higher level of awareness and enlightenment the spiritual aspirant is able to see the universality of Brahm everywhere; since this world appears uniform to him there would be nothing that would stand out to either attract his attention or repel it; since the same consciousness prevails in each unit of the living world there is no question of any dichotomy arising, and hence no cause of any confusion and perplexity regarding what is true and what is false. Therefore, for such a realised and enlightened aspirant, the entire creation becomes Brahm personified (61-65)."]

(20) (v) (e) The *Adhyatma Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes Samadhi in verse nos. 35-40 as follows—

"Verse no. 35. One should focus one's attention on one's objective or aim after diverting one's mind from either being too concerned about one's own self or from being too concerned about the medium used or employed to remember one's objective. [That is, once a wise person understands what the 'truth' is, he should pursue it with whole hearted vigour and sincerity. In his perusal of the objective of attaining the 'truth', he should be so engrossed and concentrated in achieving his aim that he loses awareness of even himself as well as the great difficulties and efforts that are needed to achieve the objective. This is called 'single pointed pursuance of one's objective, oblivious of any distractions that come in the way'. Obviously, being focused on one's objective is a precondition for success in any endeavour, especially spiritual.]

When the mind and intellect, the thoughts and emotions, become as stable, steady, unmoving and un-flickering as a flame of a lighted oil lamp at a place where there is absolutely no wind to disturb the steadiness of the flame, then this state of (mental) existence is called Samadhi. [Samadhi is a trance-like state of existence in which the person loses awareness of the gross external world around him as well as even his own body. He behaves like a blissful man in sleep-walking mode. He is perpetually at peace with himself. He feels blessed and tranquil.] [35].

“Verse nos. 36 = During this trance-like state of Samadhi, the subtle body (consisting of the mind-intellect complex) ceases to remain active, and for all practical purposes has no existence as far as the Atma or soul of the creature is concerned. The various Vrittis (inherent tendencies, habits and temperaments) influence the working of the intellect and the mind, called the subtle body, of a creature. When the subtle body becomes irrelevant, the Vrittis also become irrelevant. But when the creature wakes up from his Samadhi into the waking state of consciousness, the Atma begins its interaction with the external world through the medium of the subtle body (mind-intellect) and the gross body (the sense organs). As soon as the intellect starts functioning, the various Vrittis leap back into action once again and start their nefarious influences upon the creature’s intellect, which in turn would mould his actions [36].

[Note---Briefly, the subtle body has two components—the objective mind and the subjective intellect. The latter is ‘subjective’ because its activity is influenced by the various Vasanas and Vrittis (worldly passions and lust, desires and yearnings as well as inherent natural temperaments and inclinations of a creature) present in its causal body as a result of all the cumulative effects of past deeds and actions of the creature. These cast some or the other kind of shadow on the working of the intellect. The intellect is like the senior officer who directly comes in the contact with the boss, the Atma, on one hand, and the junior officer, the mind, on the other hand. Aside of this, the Vasanas and Vrittis act like a veil surrounding the pure Atma residing in the causal body and tamper the Atma’s interaction with the intellect. During the state of Samadhi, the Atma retreats into the cocoon of the causal body, and in higher stages of Samadhi when the person apparently appears to be awake and going about his worldly duties, in actual fact his subjective subtle body, the intellect, is defunct. Meanwhile, the objective subtle body, the mind, works like a machine receiving stimuli from the sense organs of perceptions (nose, ears, eyes, tongue and skin) and sending relevant directions to the organs of actions (hands, legs, mouth, excretory and reproductive) to act mechanically. But with the intellect defunct, the various Vrittis also remain defunct in the sense that they don’t interfere with the working of the mind. In this case of wakefulness during Samadhi, which is a deceptive form of wakefulness, a man goes about doing his work in a trance-like state. This is a state in which realised Yogis (enlightened and self realised souls) live—they live a normal life but remain oblivious to all the happenings because the intellect is shut closed. With the intellect in a dormant state, no memory of deeds done and actions taken are retained, and consequentially there is no accumulation of new Vrittis and Vasanas, no new desires, volitions and ambitions to accomplish unfulfilled deeds are generated. By and by, the residual old Vasanas and Vrittis dissipate, and with no fresh accumulation, a stage comes when the creature is purged of all his Vasanas and Vrittis altogether. This is what is called ‘doing deeds without getting involved in them’.

The innate nature and behaviour of a creature are determined by different Vasanas or Vrittis, or the worldly passions and inherent tendencies that it has. The Atma is unblemished and untainted by these notions, but is nevertheless blamed or accused of the consequences because it is the de-facto Lord or Master of creation and its faults. It cannot absolve itself of its responsibilities from these consequences. But this situation arises only when the creature thinks, though erroneously and fallaciously, that it is the ‘doer’ of any deed. This thought is provoked in it due to its ignorance about the immaculate nature of its pure self, which is the Atma. As soon as this wisdom sprouts in its bosom, the creature gets instant freedom from being affected by the different deluding notions simply because it treats itself as the uncorrupt and non-dual Atma, which is merely a witness and an observer of all that transpires around it in this world, instead of treating

his body, which does the deeds, as his true self and getting unnecessarily involved in the deeds.

The Atma, when it lives inside the physical body, is surrounded by a veil or shroud of ignorance which is like a plastic or glass transparent sheet, wrapping it from all the sides. No matter how clear and transparent that sheet might be, but it is not the same as the option of seeing and observing the truth and reality of the world direct without the intervening medium of the sheet representing ignorance and deception. So, any hint, any tinge of colour in this surrounding sheet of plastic or glass covering will make the Atma see the outside world with that particular tinge or shade of colour that appears in the surrounding sheet. Since it has no other way to determine the truth —other than removing the surrounding plastic or glass sheet itself —the Atma begins to think that the tinged world really, indeed, has that colour; i.e. the tinge is for real. But, as we see, this colour is misleading and an incorrect interpretation of fact, because it is not actually the colour of the world but is due to the presence of a tinged intervening sheet of glass or plastic.

This is what is meant in this verse. The creature ‘thinks’ that it is seeing or viewing or observing this world with the eyesight of wisdom and erudition, but it is being misled by this ‘tinged or corrupted’ biased mental vision of the actual truth and reality by the presence of ignorance and delusion caused by Agyan, or lack of truthful knowledge. In brief, what apparently appear to be the truth and the real fact is in fact not so; it is a ‘tainted, corrupted, biased and untruthful’ perception and view of the real Reality and truthful Truth!]

“Verse nos. 37 = In this world which seems endless as compared to the limited span of life of a creature, the latter does innumerable deeds. Each deed done by the creature or any action taken by him has its own set of consequences. But these can be avoided by means of Samadhi¹.

As a result, pureness and holiness comes to the fore during Samadhi. This purity or lack of all worldly taints and blemishes that could act as a scar on the creature’s pure and uncorrupt self is tantamount to enhancement of such virtues as auspiciousness, righteousness, nobility, goodness in all spheres of conduct and thought which are collectively called ‘Dharma’. That is, all those degrading and mean instincts in a person that propels him to mischief, wickedness and evil of all sorts, gradually become defunct and extinct. In its stead there rises the virtues that are good and righteous, noble and auspicious, and are a true reflection of the nature and character of the supreme and immaculate stature of the Atma which is always pure, virtuous, righteous and auspicious [37].

[Note---¹This is because during the state of *Samadhi*, the person remains mentally unaware of what his physical body is doing. His intellect and mind do not accumulate any after effects of either good or bad deeds. As a result, the causal body does not accumulate any fresh amount of Vasanas and Vrittis as described in note to verse 36 above. Since the subjective subtle body, the intellect, remains oblivious of what the gross body is doing mechanically under the junior command of the objective subtle body, the mind, the real and truthful self of the person, his Atma, does not know, for all practical purposes, what he is doing. He has no memory of it. That is why during Samadhi, a man might be sitting in extremes of climatic conditions, may be bitten by ants or rolling on a bed of velvet, but he would have no recollection of it later on. And therefore naturally, he should be absolved of or exonerated from any result of any deed done during that state. But this provision should not be misused and misconstrued as a blanket license for recklessness

and sinful behaviour done purposely and feigning ignorance when prosecuted for them, because a genuine Samadhi precludes deceit and pretences.]

“Verse nos. 38 = Those who are most learned and wise in the principles of Yoga (meditation and contemplation) call this state of Samadhi a ‘Dharma-Megh’. It means ‘a cloud that rains Dharma’. It is a metaphor for saying that this state results in a continuous flow of bliss, peace and happiness which are natural consequences of being good and righteous. These virtues rain down upon him like a shower of Amrit which is the eternal elixir of beatitude and felicity. Samadhi is akin to the cloud, while the blessings that it provides are like the rain that gives happiness and life to the world¹. [38].

[Note---¹The *rain* brings cheers and joys to the world. Without the rains, everything would parch to death; there would be no harvests, no greenery, and no merriment of a contented and happy life. Rain is a metaphor for all the good things that nature has to offer in this world to the creature, without any distinction of caste, creed, colour and faith. It is the benevolence of the Lord at its best. Similarly, Samadhi showers the aspirant with the elixir of beatitude and felicity that drenches him, soaks him and completely drowns him in its sweep!]

“Verse nos. 39-40 = When as a result of obtaining the exalted state of Samadhi, an aspirant’s ensnaring net/web of all his Vasanas is destroyed or eliminated (i.e. when all his worldly passions, desires, attachments and infatuations subside), and when there is no new accumulation of deeds---either good or bad, it is then that the aspirant first realises and understands the veracity of the great sayings, called the Mahavakyas (see note no verse no. 33 above) vis-à-vis the world. When he delves deep into them, he comes face to face with (or realises and understands) the fundamental principle behind those great sayings. This essential basis is called the ‘non-visible truth’. [39-40].

[Note--The ultimate Truth which is the absolutely Reality in this creation, cannot be physically seen or verified in normal terms. It can only be subtly experienced, witnessed and realised as the unequivocal and immutable ‘truth’. To arrive at this ‘truth’, one has to take the help of certain basic tenets and maxims, much like we have certain formulas in algebra and theorems in geometry, and these are used as a basis to arrive at a particular conclusive fact, an universally applicable benchmark against which everything else can be judged. If the wrong formula is applied to a given problem, the answer would be wrong. Similarly, in the metaphysical sphere, even a slight deviation from the truth would land the spiritual seeker far wide off the mark. But to begin with, a student has to prepare himself mentally about the truth of these statements and not be skeptical from the beginning, for in such a case he would only be harming his own progress. When the student finally understands the universal application and truth of these formulas and theorems, he cannot catch hold of them and exclaim ‘hey, I’ve got the truth in my clenched fists!’ because the ‘truth’ is so abstract that though it is universally applicable it cannot be actually grasped physically.]”

(20) (v) (f) *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, 2/3/5 describes what constitutes Samadhi. To quote—“Now, since Samadhi creates oneness of the pure consciousness or Atma with the supreme Truth which is the ultimate Reality, or when the individual creature realises the ultimate Truth of the entire existence, the sense of duality is obliterated for good. As a result, even though the aspirant wakes up into this world and appears to be doing his duties in a normal way, the profundity of the ultimate Truth that

he has realised—the fact that what is seen is this external world is an illusionary creation of the mind, that the world exists as long as the mind thinks it to be there, and that the essential operating truthful factor in the whole creation is not the gross physical frame of the world as it is seen but the subtle consciousness that is not seen and which is known as the Atma at the micro level and Brahm at the macro level—keeps him virtually indifferent and aloof from this delusive world. Since he has tasted the ambrosia of truthful and eternal bliss while he was in the state of Samadhi, it becomes his main pursuit, for the happiness that this artificial world appears to provide him, the comforts and pleasures that the sense objects give him are all illusive, impermanent and deluding for him; they are artificial, fictitious and transient. He has realised this fact, so he, being wise and erudite as well as enlightened about the actual Truth and aware of the Reality, abhors this falsehood and tries to keep a safe distance from it by not getting involved in it and falling in its trap.

Anyone who has understood the essential doctrines that pertain to Brahm realisation does not fall in the trap of falsehood, and such a person becomes one like Brahm; he becomes as exalted and honourable as Brahm; he becomes indistinguishable and inseparable from Brahm (5)."

To conclude, we can say that Samadhi means that state when the seeker attains the last stage in meditation when there is no agitation, and its place is taken over by utter silence or trance like state. In that silence, the cessation of the flow of thoughts results in annihilation of the mind, and with it, the body. When the thought processes cease, there can be no discrimination taking place. When discrimination ceases, the intellect cannot exist. Hence, in that final moment of silence, when the mind and intellect are dissolved—the thoughts are vanquished, the mind is conquered, discrimination is absent and the intellect is annihilated—the erstwhile individual merges with the infinite reality, resulting in supreme and endless bliss and beatitude.

(20) (g) The *difference between Samadhi and Sushupta* which is the third state of consciousness called the deep sleep state of existence has been described in *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, 2/3/3-4. To quote—

"Verse no. 3 = Although the mind-intellect complex is relegated to the background and rendered inconsequential because it has no role to play in both the deep sleep state of existence called 'Sushupta' as well as in the trance-like state of consciousness called 'Samadhi', the two stages of Sushupta (deep sleep) and Samadhi (trance-like state) are vastly different from one another though they apparently seem to be alike because of the defunct mind-intellect complex in both the cases.

During the Sushupta state of existence, the mind dissolves in ignorance or is concealed in a veil of ignorance, as a result of which there is no scope of attaining 'Mukti', or liberation and deliverance from the bondage of ignorance (3).

[Note—During the 'deep sleep state of existence of consciousness', which is the third state in which the consciousness exists, the mind becomes defunct and ceases to have any role. That is, a man does not see any dream nor remembers anything happening around him in the outside world while he was lying asleep in a virtual 'un-consciousness' state of existence simply because the mind which perceives such perceptions is not functioning.

The word 'ignorance' refers to (a) the unawareness of the bliss that is obtained at the culmination of Samadhi, and also (b) to the unawareness of what is happening in the physical world of the waking state of consciousness as well as the imaginary world of the

dreaming state. In fact, this Sushupta stage can be compared to the proverbial ‘lull before the storm’. The creature has two options now—either to step back into the world of dreams and then to the world of wakefulness, or progress further ahead to the next step of Samadhi.

Since the mind is the instrument that receives and stores information from the outside world in its memory, when it ceases to function the man is not able to experience anything about the external world or even dream of anything. Therefore the Atma, which is the truthful identity of the man and the actual authority that feels and experiences any thing, remains ignorant of what is happening in the physical external world while the man sleeps, and at the same time since it is not even dreaming it remains oblivious of what is happening in the imaginary world of dreams that the active mind conjures up during the dreaming state of existence.

Hence, a sleeping man is ignorant of everything—whether that pertains to the world of waking state or the world of dreams. The Atma is at peace with itself; it is freed from the influences of the mind as well as the various entrapments caused by the body and its sense organs. But this freedom is transient and temporary, for as soon as he wakes up, the entire setup snaps back to life and the mind becomes active, thereby enabling the man to witness and experience the happenings of the world, and be affected by them. Thus the man no longer remains free from the fetters that had robbed him of his peace and tranquility. Similarly during dreams, the man is able to witness and experience what is happening in that world of dreams. Though that world is fictional, yet he is very much involved in it and affected by what he sees in his dreams as is evident when he gets frightened by nightmares or recollects pleasant dreams while he is awake, especially if the physical world in which he lives is not as pleasant as the one he sees in his dreams.

So for all practical purposes, the Atma is peaceful only till the time it sleeps soundly, but this is a temporary phase because as soon as the man wakes up, the awareness of the world with all its problems snatches his Atma’s peace and bliss that it had been enjoying earlier during sleep. In short, the man is not permanently freed from the world of worries and sorrows, and is therefore not free and liberated in the true sense of the word. While he is awake, his mind is pulling him towards this world of material comforts and pleasures. When he is dreaming, the mind takes him on a trajectory of fancy in which he can do things that were not possible for him during the waking state. Both the worlds are entangling for him, pulling him in opposite directions, and the freedom from them that he finds during deep sleep or Sushupta is only temporary.]

“Verse no. 4 = During the Samadhi state of existence, all the faults and flaws categorised as ‘Tama’ (i.e. the meanest qualities in a man) are exhausted or annihilated. These Tama qualities form a veil around the pure consciousness or Atma in the form of various Vrittis (inherent tendencies and temperaments of the creature that define his character and behavioural pattern in this world). During the state of Samadhi, the conscious Atma becomes a mere witness of what is happening around it without getting emotionally involved in anything. As a result of this, these Vrittis have no effect on the Atma. During this state, the mind is subjugated because it is focused on the pure self instead of in the world and its accompanying trauma. As is well known and is a well established doctrine of the Upanishads that ‘the delusory world is a creation of the mind, and is based on the ignorance of the truth or reality’, so when the mind is pulled away from the world which is however is its own creation, and instead concentrated elsewhere, in this case in the pure self, then it would not have the scope to create more mischief. As a result, all

delusions are eliminated, and stability accompanied by peace and bliss become dominant features (4).

[Note--With all delusions and ignorance exhausted, and with their progenitor the mind firmly vanquished, the man is able to attain truthful Mukti. 'Mukti' refers to true liberation of the creature from the bondage of ignorance, and deliverance from its shackling effects. If ignorance persists, then merely annihilation of the mind for a short while, or mere non-functioning of the mind temporarily, does not provide Mukti. In the case of Samadhi, the mind is not functioning even during the waking state, so the liberation from all the delusions created by it is permanent. This is Mukti

In verse no. 3, it has been shown how the state of the mind changes from one state to another. In the state of Samadhi, this does not happen because during this state the man remains perpetually engrossed in the awareness of his 'pure self' and enjoys the accompanying bliss that comes with self-realisation even during his waking state when he appears to be doing his normal work of the world while he is actually mentally and emotionally aloof, disinterested and detached from them. His mind is not hooked to the world but constantly, consistently and persistently focused on his inner self. As a result, the mind does not respond to stimuli from the external material world, and therefore it does not store any information for the sub-conscious to dream of even during the dreaming state of existence. There is a uniform state of existence marked by bliss, and detachment and non-involvement of the Atma in anything related to the mundane world.

That is why Mukti is possible during the state of Samadhi but not during the state of Sushupta.]”

(21) (i) The *pitfalls and obstacles of Yoga*—

The *Yog Kundalini Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse no. 56-57 describes the pitfalls of Yoga, in verse nos. 58-61 narrates the ten obstacles of Yoga, and in verse no. 74 describes the eight hindrances that the spiritual aspirant faces before he can witness the bliss of self-realisation. Now let us see them one by one

(a) The *Pitfalls of Yoga*—“Verse no. 56-57 = [These verses list the pitfalls that are to be guarded against.]

Sleeping during the day, keeping awake during the night, withholding the urge to evacuate the bowels and the bladder (i.e. to resist going to the toilet when necessary), to walk excessively that causes fatigue, not doing the various Asanas (sitting postures) properly, to strain too much in doing Pranayam (breath control exercises), and to constantly worry (over imaginary and real problems)—these are some of the pitfalls against which a wise practitioner should guard because they can make him sick very quickly (56-57).”

(b) The *ten Obstacles of Yoga*—“Verse no. 58-61 = [These verses list the ten obstacles in the practice of Yoga.]

If the practitioner imagines that he has developed some disease by doing Yoga exercises and stops midway, then this is the first obstacle of Yoga [58].

The second obstacle is not to have full faith in the practice and doubt its effectiveness and authenticity. The third obstacle is to get intoxicated and become careless and callous while doing Yoga practice, lacking diligence and sincerity. The

fourth obstacle is to be lazy and indolent, doing Yoga half-heartedly and as burden rather than with enthusiasm. The fifth obstacle is sleeping too much, more than necessary [59].

The sixth obstacle is not to do Yoga lovingly, i.e. not having affection for it and lacking sincere devotion for and commitment towards it. The seventh obstacle is to make errors and be deluded with pretensions, such as having a false sense of fame and importance or that access to some great mystical powers are in the offing. The eighth obstacle is to be indulgent in and having a yearning for the objects of the senses in this material world and a desire for self gratification. The ninth obstacle is the fear of ill fame and dishonour [60].

Wise ones have said that the tenth obstacle is not being able to successfully understand the essentials of Yoga and not being able to obtain its basic benefits (both in terms of spiritual upliftment and enjoying the ecstasy and bliss of realisation of the conscious self, as well as the attainment of various other physical benefits such as acquisition of mystical powers, fine tuning of the body and getting rid of bodily ailments, acquiring name and fame etc.). [This observation also implies that one is not properly able understand the wide meaning and import of Yoga, both in its physical form as the numerous exercises involved as well as in its metaphysical and spiritual aspects. It includes not properly understanding how to do the various Yoga exercises properly and subsequently failing in them, not knowing their benefits or the pitfalls to guard against, and so on and so forth.]

A wise and erudite aspirant should ponder over them deeply and take precautions against them. He should eliminate these hindrances in Yoga to be successful in its practice [61]. (58-61).”

(c) The *eight hindrances* to witnessing the bliss of self realisation that comes through the practice of Yoga resulting in awakening of the Kundalini—According to *Yog Kundalini Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 74, when the subtle energy of the Kundalini is aroused and the spiritual aspirant practicing Yoga wishes to utilise this powerful force of Nature to make him experience the bliss and ecstasy that comes with self-realisation, there are eight hindrances that he faces. Let us see what this particular verse has to say—“ In this way, the Kundalini Shakti is able to transcend or overcome the hurdles created by the eight-fold Prakriti or the eight types of hindrances that come in the way of one realising one’s true nature as pure consciousness known as the Atma¹.

As a result, the ascetic is able to have a first hand experience of ‘Shiva’ (the eternal Truth and auspicious Atma) residing in his own self. This realisation is self-realisation. The cumulative affect of all this is that the grosser form of the cosmic consciousness in the form of the various Prans (vital winds of the body that keep the body alive and active) plunges into and become one with the subtler form of the same divine cosmic consciousness known as the Atma (the ‘true self’ of the man and the only truth that really matters from the spiritual perspective).

In other words, the culmination of Yoga is to help one realise one’s true divine from and find rest in the spiritual glory of self-realisation, the discovery of the ultimate fount of bliss and joy residing in one’s own bosom as the consciousness known as the Atma (74).

[Note--¹These eight obstacles are the following—the five elements such as the sky, air, fire, water and earth which form the structure of the gross body + the Mana or mind + the Buddhi or intellect that together make up the subtle part of this body + Ahankar or ego and pride which forms the basic quality that prevents a man from coming to terms with

the fact that what he has acquired in this world is not the real thing and all his efforts of gaining happiness from the material objects of the world have yielded nothing for him in real value. Thus the total comes to 5 elements + 1 Mana + 1 Buddhi + 1 Ahankar = 8.]”

(21) (ii) *How to overcome the various hindrances of Yoga—*

These have been described in detail in Yoga Tattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 14-18. To quote—

“Verse no. 14 = [The following verses describe the ways to overcome the different faults and shortcomings enumerated above.]

Now I shall narrate to you the ways by which one can overcome the negative effects of the various faults, shortcomings, impurities and imperfections that taint the Atma. Say, how can Gyan (knowledge and wisdom) devoid of Yoga (meditation and coordination of the theoretical metaphysical knowledge with its practical spiritual application) ever be useful and successful in providing stable and permanent Moksha (emancipation and salvation, liberation and deliverance) to the creature and his soul? (14).

[Note—Refer also to Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/2/2.]

“Verse no. 15 = Similarly, Yoga devoid of Gyan also cannot bestow Moksha. Therefore, those desirous of obtaining Moksha (i.e. those who wish to break free from the cycle of birth and death and its attendant miseries and torments, those who wish to attain emancipation and salvation for their self) should strive to establish a synergy between both Gyan and Yoga. That is, they should employ both Gyan and Yoga in a well coordinated manner to reach their spiritual goal (15).

“Verse no. 16 = It is out of Agyan (lack of correct and true knowledge about the reality; ignorance) that the world appears to shackle the creature. And therefore Gyan (true and correct knowledge as well as erudition and wisdom) is the instrument that can free one from this illusion of shackle and the cause of it, the world.

Gyan is the primary instrument needed not only for obtaining liberation and deliverance from the world and its attendant delusory affects, but also to wisely use the techniques of Yoga and put them to good effect in this direction. It was Gyan that had helped the initiation of creation at the very beginning itself (because to start anything as technical and complicated as the unfolding of this vast and mysterious creation, one needs to be not only aware and conversant with its detailed process but an expert in it and have practical knowledge of it in order to successfully proceed with it and attain the objective). Gyan is the medium by which one can successfully reach one’s destination and accomplish one’s objectives in life (which in the present case is obtaining Moksha for the soul, attaining spiritual upliftment and enlightenment leading to one’s liberation from the fetters of delusions and ignorance that had trapped the soul in their net). It is Gyan that distinguishes the wise and enlightened creature and sets him aside from the rest of the multitudes (16).

“Verse no. 17-18 = [These verses emphasize what constitutes real and truthful Gyan.]

That with the help of which one can know about one's truthful self which has the following eclectic divine virtues is called the real and truthful Gyan (erudition, wisdom, enlightenment, knowledge and awareness). This Gyan helps one to learn about and experience such unique and eclectic spiritual concepts as Kaivalya¹ (the supreme stature of existence which is the one of its kind and the most exalted state of existence when nothing but the non-dual consciousness is discernible everywhere in the world by the enlightened creature), Param Pada (the supreme stature beyond which there is nothing better; the state of Kaivalya and Pram Pada are synonymous and like describing the same thing using different words to highlight its various virtues because both describe the same exalted state of non-dual existence of the consciousness or Atma of an enlightened ascetic), Nishkal (one that has no variations and fractions; one that has no Kalaas or separate forms and attributes; one that has no imperfections, faults, blemishes and taints), and Nirmal (pure and pristine, immaculate and uncorrupt, untainted and without any blemishes, clean and free of any impurities). This true form of the Atma, or pure conscious 'self' of the creature, is an embodiment of true and eternal bliss and happiness.

True Gyan entitles one to know the reality of the origin, the present establishment and the conclusion of this world along with the underlying consciousness that brings all this about. [This is because only 'living' entities would take a birth, live a life and die. Since this does happen in this world, therefore there must be some imperceptible and hidden element that brings it all about. It is Gyan of the higher order that would enlighten the wise creature about this esoteric and mysterious element known as the pure conscious Atma just like an ordinary science student needs to acquire expert knowledge and high skills to become a renowned scientist.]

Now onwards, I shall describe about Yoga (17-18).

[Note--¹The word *Kaivalya* means the 'only one' or the non-dual state. It is the supreme stature of existence which is the one of its kind and the most exalted state of existence when nothing but the non-dual consciousness is discernible everywhere in the world by the enlightened creature. There is non-duality and uniformity everywhere. It is a state of existence which is similar to the state of Samadhi in which the man goes about his daily life doing his chores in a routine way without getting emotionally involved in them and even remaining totally oblivious of what he is doing. He remains totally submerged in his inner self and thoughts. He appears in a virtual trance-like state of existence usually observed in realised ascetics and great philosophers. People regard such men as absent minded, but they are so much absorbed in themselves that they are not concerned with others think of them. For them, the external world ceases to exist though they physically live in it and interact with it. This Kaivalya form of existence is tantamount to having emancipation while a man still has a body, because in this state he is free from all worries, sufferings and sorrows as well as all forms of attachments, entanglements and involvements with the artificial and deluding world that are the usual features of a worldly man submerged in world's entrapping charm. This state is comparable to liberation of the soul upon death when it is physically liberated from the bondages of the limitations imposed by the gross body; the only difference being that in the former case the man is alive and enjoys the body, while in the latter case he sheds the burden of the body. The Kaivalya state is considered superior because such a man lives a life of happiness and contentedness; he never suffers from any worldly miseries and worries, he treats the world around him as of no consequence, and remains indifferent to its deluding effects and their entanglements. On the other hand, the ordinary man might find emancipation upon death, but his life is a burden while he is still alive in it. Such a man has not truly understood the teachings of the scriptures; he has not understood the spirit

of spiritualism, for their main aim is to give peace and tranquility to the tormented soul and help in its liberation from the deluding effects of the body and the world. This concept has been elaborately described in *Muktiko-panishad* of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. The concept has also been described in other Upanishads, such as *Subalo-panishad*, Canto 13, verse no. 1, and *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad*, Brahmin 2, section 3, verse no. 1 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, and *Sarva Saar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda.]”

(22) The Aasan (postures) of Yoga—

The various sitting postures of Yoga are as integral to successful completion of Yoga as are its other limbs. [See the Eight Limbs of Yoga—s.no. 16 (a) (ii).]

The Aasan is the sitting posture adopted by a practitioner of Yoga (meditation) in order to concentrate his mind and vital energies of the body to obtain success in his spiritual pursuit or obtain access to the boundless source of subtle energy lying untapped inside his own body for acquiring mystical powers and deep insight into the para-natural. Successful accomplishment of Yoga is dependent upon such sitting postures because they are like specific instruments to be employed by a student of any particular discipline of science in order to obtain success in his experiments, and at the same time are like strict regimes to be followed by him for this success.

Some of the Upanishads that describe the prominent Aasans in great detail are the following—Jabal Darshan, Canto 3 of the Sam Veda tradition which describes nine types of Aasans; Trishikhi Brahmin, Canto 2, verse nos. 35-52 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition which describes seventeen types of AAsans; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 15-17 lists twelve Aasans, and Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 3-6 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes two main Aasans.

Some other places where a reference of the Aasans are mentioned in connection with Yoga and Pranayam are Mandal Brahmin, Brahmin 1, section 1, verse no. 5, Yog Tattva Upanishad, verse no. 29, Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 84, Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 69.

Now let us see what the main Aasans are according to the Upanishads.

(a) The 17 Aasans according to the *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 35-52 are the following—Swastik Aasan, Gomukh Aasan, Virasan, Yogasan, Padmasan, Baddha Padmasan, Kukutta Aasan, Kurmasan, Dhanush Aasan, Singhasan or Singh Aasan, Bhadrasan or Bhadra Aasan, Muktasana or Mukta Aasan, Mayurasana or Mayur Aasan, Matsyaasan or Matsya Aasan, Siddhasana or Siddha Aasan, Paschimotan Aasan, and Sukhasana or Sukha Aasan.

“Verse no. 35 = The sitting posture called *Swastik Aasan* is one in which a person sits cheerfully in an erect position, with the sole of one foot lying against the center of the thigh of the opposite leg¹ [35].

[Note--¹Verse nos.28-32 define the eight branches of Yoga while verse nos. 33-34 enumerate the ten Yams and Niyams. See also Jabal-darshan Upanishad, canto 2 of Sam Veda tradition in this context.]

36. To sit steady and erect so that the legs are bent inwards at the knees and the left ankle bones are placed to the right side of the spine while the right ankle bones are to the left side, is called *Gomukh Asan* because this is how a cow sits. [The body is held erect. The left hand is taken to the back and it hooks itself to the right hand which has been brought to the back by lifting it and crossing it over the right shoulder. The fingers of both the hands are bent inwards towards the palms, and then they hook each other behind the middle of the spine.] [36].

37. To sit steady and erect with the legs bent inwards from the knee so that the lower part of a leg (i.e. the calf or the shank) is tucked or pressed under the thigh of the same leg, and the buttocks rest on the heels of the upturned foot resting flat on the ground with its sole pointing upwards from behind the rear part of the buttocks—this sitting posture is known as *Virasan*, or the way a warrior should sit.

[There is a variation of this posture in which both the legs are not folded in; only the right leg is closed in, while the left leg is bent at approximate 90^0 at the knee and its sole lies flat on the ground. The body is thus supported by one leg fully bent at the knee and one leg at 90^0 at the knee.] [37].

38. To sit steady and erect so that the heel of the right leg is placed to the left side of the anus (under the buttocks) and the heel of the left leg is placed to the right side of the anus, is called *Yogasan*. This is what those who are expert in Yoga (meditation) say [38].

39. To sit cross-legged so that the upper part of the foot (i.e. the opposite side of the sole) along with the toes of one leg is placed on the thigh of the opposite leg (i.e. left toes on the right thigh, and right toes on the left thigh), is called *Padmasan* (literally to sit in a lotus posture). [The soles would be pointing outwards while resting on the thighs and the body would be held erect—i.e. the spine, neck and head would be in a straight line. The hands, with palms facing upwards and resting one on the top of the other, are placed on the folded legs in front of and below the navel. The chin is drawn in and held tightly near the base of the Adam's apple at the pit of the throat. This sitting posture is said to dispel/ameliorate all diseases, and counter or antidote all poisons. That is, this sitting posture is very beneficial for the body.] [39].

40. A *Baddha Padmasan* (literally, a closed or tied form of Padmasan) is when, after sitting in a normal or common form of Padmasan posture (as described in verse no. 39), the big toe of the left foot is held by the right hand, and that of the right foot is held by the left hand. [In this posture, the hands are taken behind the back, and the clasping of the toe of the opposite side is done from behind. To felicitate this posture, the spine will have to be curved backwards a bit. The hands and legs are virtually 'bound or tied' to each other. That is why it is called 'Baddha' or tied or closed form of Padmasan.] [40].

41. A *Kukutta Asan* (literally, to sit like a cock) is when, after sitting in a normal Padmasan posture (as described in verse no. 39), both the hands are passed under the legs through the gap between the calf and the thigh of the respective side, the palms are spread out on the ground and the body is lifted up (levitated) on the straightened hands with the open palms and its fingers acting as pedestals on which the body appears to be mounted [41].

42. A *Kurmasan* (literally to sit like a tortoise) is the next higher Asan after the *Kukutta Asan*. In this case, the two shoulders are virtually tied or clasped by the hands (whereas in *Kukutta Asan* the hands were thrust through closed or folded legs). [To do this *Kurma Asan*, the legs are stretched out but slightly bent at the knee, the hands are passed from under the leg of the respective side and then bent upwards from elbow joint to be taken towards the shoulder of the same side. The neck is bent forward towards the ground sufficiently enough to enable the two hands to clasp each other from behind the nape of the neck. In this position, the back would be bent forward to be almost parallel to the ground, the legs outstretched, chin almost touching the ground in front, and the hands clasped behind the neck. Seen from the front, this posture resembles a tortoise, and hence the name.] [42].

43. A *Dhanush Asan* (literally, a posture resembling a stringed bow) is when the big toes of the feet are clasped by the hands, the body stretched and bent forwards while the legs are slightly curved upwards. This makes the body appear like a stringed bow [43].

[Note—There is another version of this ‘bow-like’ Asan. According to it, instead of bending forward and clasping the toes while sitting on the ground, one lies down flat on the ground and the body is curved (arched) backwards in a bow like shape so that the front of the abdomen appears to be in a parabolic or concave bowl shape. The legs are lifted up and bent towards the head from behind the back, while almost simultaneously the head and upper part of the body are also lifted up and the hands are taken over and behind the shoulders to clasp the toe of the leg of the same side. This clasping would obviously be at the back of the body. When viewed from the side, the body would appear to be like a stringed bow, and hence the name ‘Dhanush Asan’.]

44. A *Singhasan or Singh Asan* (literally, to sit like a lion) is to sit in a posture so that the ‘siwani’, or the fold of skin between the anus and the genitals, called the suture, is pressed by the ankle bones of the opposite side, and the body is lowered on the legs which are bent or folded in from the knees, while the hands are stretched out and the open palms placed on the bent knee of the same side so that the fingers stretch out like a palm-fan with the open palm resting on the bent knee joint. [Usually in this posture, the mouth is wide open and the tongue protrudes out, while the eyes glare at some point in the distance or at the tip of the nose. This is how a lion sits, and hence the name. This posture makes the body resemble a sitting lion. This is a posture adored by ascetics (Yogis) and it is dedicated to the memory of Lord Narsingh, the half man and half lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu to liberate his great child devotee Prahalad from the torments inflicted upon him by his own demon father. Amongst the benefits of this Aasan is that it clears the voice and removes foul breath.] [44].

45. A *Bhadrasan or Bhadra Asan* (literally, to sit like a gentleman) is to sit in an erect posture by placing the two ankle joints under the buttocks on either side of the suture, i.e. the junction point of the testicles and the anus such that they (the two ankle joints) touch each other, and then using the hands to firmly clasp the soles of the feet of the respective side from the rear side of the buttock (i.e. left foot by the left hand, and the right foot by the right hand). [This posture can neutralise the ill effects of all diseases which cause the

production of toxins in the body, or which are caused in the body by taking external poisons or other kinds of toxins; it helps to get rid of diseases as well.] [45].

46. A *Muktasan or Mukta Asan* (literally, the posture that gives liberation and deliverance) is when the ankle bones of one side of the body are placed under the buttock of the opposite side of the suture joint. The foot is either held at right angles to the ground with its sole pointing outward and the toe pointing inwards, such that the body is held erect on the toes of the legs which would now act as pedestals to support the weight of the body.

There is a variation of this Asan. In this, the foot is not held at right angles to the ground but upturned and placed flat on it under the buttocks so that the sole points upwards from behind the buttocks, and the body rests on the legs bent tightly inwards and tucked under the buttocks. In this sitting position, the heels would be pressing against the buttocks from below on either side of the suture. [Refer verse no. 37.] [46].

47-52. A *Mayurasan or Mayur Asan* (literally, to sit like a peacock) entails putting the palms flat on the ground, pressing the elbows against the abdomen on either side of the navel, and then balancing the body in a horizontal plane with the hands and open palms resting flat on the ground to act as pedestals (47). In this posture, the head and the legs are turned upwards and away from the ground. This posture resembles the outline features of a peacock. [This 'Mayurasan' has the potential to destroy all sins.]

A *Matsyaasan or Matsya Asan* (literally, to sit like a fish) is done (by lying on the back on the ground and) bending the right leg at the knee joint and resting the foot on the left leg at the point where the thigh joins the abdomen (i.e. at the pelvic girdle). Then the big toe of this right leg is grasped by the hands. (For this, the body will have to be curved slightly backwards along the spine so that the hands can reach the toe). [The left leg is similarly bent and its foot placed on the right thigh at its upper end. The toe of the left leg is also grasped by the hand to ensure that both the legs and their foot are symmetrically and properly placed. The hands are then taken behind the head, bent at the elbow joints, and then the two elbows are clasped by the fingers of the opposite hand. Thus, the hands would form a square or rectangular enclosure around the head. The previously curved body is allowed to lower itself and lie flat on the ground. This posture resembles a fish, and therefore the name Matsya Asan (48 ½).

A *Siddhasan or Siddha Asan* (literally, a posture that bestows mystical powers, or a posture that only accomplished experts can do) is when the ankle of the left foot is tucked under the suture (which is a fold of skin between the anus and the testicles) and the right foot is placed on the top of the genitals. The body is kept erect in this posture. To sit in this posture, the two legs are first stretched out. The left leg is then bent at the knee and folded in so that the heel touches the genitals and the sole lies flat against the inner thighs of the right leg. Then the right leg is folded in and the heel is placed in front of the pubic bone right above the testicles, and the sole touches the inner thigh of the previously folded left leg. The two hands are stretched out and the outer side of the wrist of each hand is placed on the bent knee joint of the respective side. The palm is opened and the thumb is touched by the bent first finger to form a virtual ring, with the remaining three fingers held out straight. The practitioner sits perfectly in a ram-rod straight position, with the spine, the neck and the head in a straight line. The mental sight is fixed

on a spot in front of the nose, and this state of intense concentration is maintained as long as is feasible for the practitioner. Then the legs are gradually unfolded, and after some period of relaxation the process is repeated with the opposite leg being folded in first and placed below the other leg. [It is believed that this posture is one of the best postures to be adopted for Yoga amongst the eighty four lakh (84×10^5) postures of meditation. The fact that there are as many numbers of Asans as there are species of living beings is endorsed by Dyanbindu Upanishad, verse no. 42 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. This Siddha Asan is capable of cleansing all the seventy two thousand Naadis (ducts in the body), and is so-called because it is possible to access the divine source of cosmic energy trapped inside the body as well as experience the cosmic power of the kindled Spirit by employing this Asan. The word 'Siddha' implies one who has acquired stupendous mystical and supernatural powers that are beyond the parameters of the physical and mundane world.] (49 ½).

A *Paschimotan Asan* (literally that posture that marks the setting of the sun in the western horizon) is when the legs are stretched out straight on the ground, the big toes are clasped by the hands, and the head is placed on the two knees that touch each other. Obviously, the body would have to bend forward at the waist (50 ½).

A *Sukhasan or Sukha Asan* (literally that posture which gives comfort and is easy for the aspirant to do) is one which is comfortable for an aspirant. If it is not possible to adopt other postures (as described in previous verse nos. 35-50 ½) for any reason whatsoever, then one should sit in whatever posture or position that is comfortable and convenient for him. A person who has obtained expertise in these various sitting postures or Asans is deemed to have won control over the three legendary worlds (i.e. the subterranean, the terrestrial and the celestial worlds which correspond to the nether world, the mortal world, and the heavenly world) in a symbolic manner (52). [47-52].

[Note—Verse nos. 35-52 describe the various Asans which are sixteen in number. One should also refer to Jabal-darshan Upanishad, canto 3 of the Sam Veda tradition in this connection.]

(b) The *11 Aasans* according to *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse nos. 15-16 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition are the following—Chakra*, Padmasan, Kurma, Mayur, Kukut, Viraasan, Swastik, Bhadrasan, Singhasan, Muktaasan, and Gomukh Aasan.

*The *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 17 describes the *Chakra Aasan* as follows—“The simplest ‘Chakra Aasan’ (literally to adopt the posture resembling a wheel) is briefly being described here. The left thigh is placed on the right knee with the left leg bent inwards towards the right buttocks. Similarly, the right thigh is placed on the left knee and the leg bent inwards towards the left buttock. [This ensures that the part of the body below the pelvis assumes a circular shape with the legs bent at the knee and folded in unlike the usual shape of the body wherein the legs protrude out from the lower abdomen lick two sticks.] Then the upper part of the body is held perpendicular to this wheel-like shape assumed by the legs. [The entire shape would resemble a wheel with an axle.] (17).”

(c) The *9 Aasans* according to *Jabal Darshan Upanishad*, Canto 3 of Sam Veda tradition are the following—Swastik-Aasan, Gomukh-Aasan, Padma-Aasan, Vira-Aasan, Singh-Aasan, Mukta-Aasan, Bhadra-Aasan, Mayur-Aasan, and Sukha-Aasan.

(d) The 4 *Aasans*—According to *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 29, there are four main *Aasans*. They are the following—Siddha, Padma, Singh and Bhadra.

(e) The 2 *Aasans*—According to the *Yog Kundalini Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse no. 5-6, there are two principal *Aasans* and they are *Padmasan* and *Vajra Aasan*. This *Upanishad* describes them as follows—

“Verse no. 5 = The *Padmasan* is basically to sit in an erect position, cross-legged, so that the sole of one foot rests, facing upwards, on the thigh of the opposite leg. This posture of meditation helps one to overcome all sins and evil effects (5).

“Verse no. 6 = The *Vajrasan* is to sit in a posture such that the body is ram-rod straight, i.e. the neck, the head and the spine are in a straight line. Then the left leg is bent inwards at the knee joint and turned backwards so that the heels press against the ‘Mool Kandha’ (the genitals). The right leg is similarly bent in and its heels placed above the heel of the left leg (6).”

The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse 84 mentions the *Vajra Aasan*. This is the following—the body is curved or arched backwards like a bow in such a way that the head touches the upturned soles of the feet. To give effect to this *Aasan*, one should sit on the ground with the two legs bent backwards from the knee and the soles pointing upwards behind the buttocks. The upper part of the body is slowly bent backwards until the rear of the head touches the upturned soles from behind. This posture is called *Vajra* after the weapon of the same name held by Indra, the king of Gods, which gives him invincibility in the entire creation. In other words, the practitioner of *Vajra Aasan* too acquires such great powers that he too becomes invincible.

The *Yog Kundalini Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 6 describes the *Vajra Aasan* as follows—“ The *Vajrasan* is to sit in a posture such that the body is ram-rod straight, i.e. the neck, the head and the spine are in a straight line. Then the left leg is bent inwards at the knee joint and turned backwards so that the heels press against the ‘Mool Kandha’ (the genitals). The right leg is similarly bent in and its heels placed above the heel of the left leg (6).

[Note—This *Aasan* is usually used done with a slight variation—instead of putting the right heel on top of the left heel which together press the genitals, they are placed side by side below the genitals. This is a far more convenient posture than the one describes above. Everything depends upon the ability of the practitioner. This is also the sign of *SiddhAasan*.]”

Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Brahmin 1, section 1, verse no. 5, describes *Shukasan* as follows—To sit in a posture that is comfortable for a long time without making the aspirant restless is called *Sukhaasan*. To remain in a single posture without making any especial efforts to do so, i.e. without even being aware that one is sitting in that posture, is called *Chirniwas*. [That is, any sitting posture that enables the aspirant to sit comfortably for a long period of time at a stretch is preferred to a formal posture that, though advised by experts, gives restlessness because such postures

would not be conducive to concentration of the mind due to the pain and discomfort caused to the body.] (5).

(23) (a) The Mudras of Yoga—

The word *Mudra* means ‘bodily postures taken during meditative or Yoga sessions’. These are the following—‘Yoni’ (योनि), ‘Beej’ (बीज), ‘Khechari’ (खेचरी), ‘Mahankush’ (महानकुश), ‘Mahonmadini’ (महोनमादिनी), ‘Sarwawashankari’ (सर्ववशंकरी), ‘Sarwakarshini’ (सर्वकर्षिणी), ‘Sarwavidravini’ (सर्वविद्राविणी), ‘Sarwa Sankshovini’ (सर्वसंक्षोभिणी).

The Vijay Tantra explains the esoteric meaning of Mudra thus—‘the company of the good leads to liberation and evil company to bondages; closure of evil company is termed as Mudra’.

The *Mudra* is a special posture adopted by any one or more organ of the body while doing meditation and contemplation. The Mudra supplements and compliments the various Aasans or sitting postures. They are supposed to have magical efficacy and bestow special occult powers on the practitioner. It involves all the external organs such as the hands, legs, head, mouth, tongue, neck etc. These Mudras form an integral part of formal forms of ritualistic worship involving Tantras (use of charm-instruments, magical formulas and other forms of specialised occult worship) as well as during Japa (repetition of Mantras). These Mudras are said to harness the latent subtle and divine energy inherently present in the body of the worshipper and harmonize it with the cosmic dynamic energy of the deity being worshipped in order to bring about an integration between them, thereby enabling the practitioner to benefit from these stupendous powers of Nature as well as to fulfill all his desired wishes. In terms of metaphysics and spiritualism, Mudras, in conjunction with the different Aasans and other components of Yoga, help the practitioner to attain his spiritual goal of self-realisation and kindling the hitherto concealed divinity represented by the magnificent and glorious Atma or pure consciousness present inside his bosom. It helps him to focus his mind and harness his latent spiritual energy. From the practical point of view, these Mudras are physical exercises to tap the astounding dynamic energy and vitality by making the body flexible, supple, elastic, softened and pliable so that its rigidity is removed and all its blocked Naadis (nerves, veins, arteries, capillaries and other ducts) become de-clogged, cleansed and rejuvenated. From the spiritual perspective, the various Mudras, Aasan, Bandhas and Japa help the aspirant to find freedom from the fetters of the body and attain liberation and deliverance from it by diverting his Pran (vital winds representing the life-factors in the body), along with his Atma (the consciousness present in the body) to escape from this gross physical body and merge with their cosmic and universal form. That is, he is able to find final emancipation and salvation by merging his own ‘self’ with the cosmic ‘Self’ known as the supreme transcendental Brahm.

If his object of worship and spiritual pursuit is Brahm, he becomes one with the latter, while if his object is one or the other forms of Brahm, such as the different Gods, viz. Vishnu, Shiva etc., then he becomes one with them. The point is that he obtains success in whatever he has embarked to do.

The word Mudra means to seal, to close and stamp, to adopt a posture. The Mudra compliments the different sitting postures called the Aasans, and they help in ‘sealing or

closing' the various openings of the body at the upper and lower ends of the abdomen. It involves adopting certain postures that often appear grotesque and very difficult to practice, such as the varying positions in which the fingers are crossed in various combinations and the position of the eyes, tongue, mouth, hands etc., but are nevertheless necessary to enable the body to gather sufficient energy and muscular strength to cope with the rigors of Yoga. In practical world we also observe that when one has to do some very strenuous exercise, the body's natural reflexes make the muscles taught and one often clasps the teeth and close the mouth and hold the breath to commandeer sufficient stamina and strength to face the challenge. If this happens in this ordinary world, then one can imagine the degree of strength and stamina needed to control and harness the dynamic energy of Nature that would be unleashed by Yoga. It is not an easy task.

References:—(1) Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/3/5, 1/3/8, and 2/1/5, 8; Advai Tarak, verse no. 12.

(2) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 26-27, 112-129; Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 2 which describes the Khechhari Mudra in detail; Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 79-93; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 69-70 which describe the Bandha Mudra; Varaha Upanishad, in its Canto 5, verse no. 68 says that the Mudras and Bandhas can reward the ascetic with complete liberation and deliverance of his soul.

(3) Sam Veda tradition—Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 52-71.

(4) Atharva Veda tradition—Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 7, verse nos. 14-17, 39-42/2.

The various Mudras of Yoga:—

(i) *Shambhavi Mudra*—According to the *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, 1/3/5, the Shambhavi Mudra is the following—“When the Yogi focuses both his sights—the internal sight of wisdom and insight, as well as the external sight of the physical eyes—constantly, persistently, unwaveringly and unblinkingly on the object or target, which in this case is Brahm, then it is called ‘Shambhavi Mudra’¹.

Amid all the forms of occult mystical practices pertaining to Brahm realisation, called the Tantra², this is the most profound and the most esoteric form of Vidya (knowledge and science). With this knowledge and awareness, one is able to get liberation and deliverance from this mundane, artificial, deluding and materialistic entrapping world of sense objects.

Worship of this truthful, transcendental and supreme form of Truth known as Brahm bestows the spiritual seeker with the fruit or reward of ‘Moksha’, i.e. it provides him with emancipation and salvation for his soul (verse no. 5).

[Note—¹The *Shambhavi Mudra* is one of the various postures of Yoga adopted during meditation by ascetics. It involves sitting in a Padmasana (crossed-legged, erect spine and open palms resting upon the laps in the front) and concentrating one's line of vision/sight at a point on the tip of the nose or in the tri-junction of the eyebrows and the root of nose. See also Brahman 2, section 1, verse no.5, and Brahman 3, section 1, verse no.1 in this context.

²The *Tantras* are the mystical religious treatises supposed to be compiled by Lord Shiva, the patron God of ascetics and hermits, containing mystical charms and secret

formulas for the attainment of supernatural powers. This occult science and its prescribed esoteric form of worship involve elaborate rituals, magical charms, use of mystical formulas and instruments, offering of sacrifices etc.

There are three dimensions of Tantra—(a) Mantra, (b) Yantra and (c) Tantra. Mantra is pure sound, and it consists of various monosyllables and letters pertaining to specific Gods much like alphabets used in algebra and other branches of mathematics as well as in complex physics diagrams to depict various coded information and data. Every sound has an energy wave associated with it which takes a definite form depending upon the frequency, amplitude and other aspects as proved by an oscilloscope. The seed or root words forming the Mantra are the purest forms of sound. The Yantra is the physical form that these sounds take, and is depicted in the form of a diagram or sketch having various Mantras like a text book of music. Yantra is an instrument to use the Mantra much like the musical instrument is used for the purpose of transforming the magic of sound to produce a captivating and enchanting music which has a therapeutic value as well. Again, a Yantra is like an instrument of physics that uses various components to create a machine that can generate stupendous powers that are beyond the scope of these individual components when they are kept separately. The Yantra is like a figure in geometry that uses lines and different alphabets to mark various parameters, and then uses these parameters to deduce some fundamental truths of science, whether it is in the realm of mathematics or of physics. The Mantras are these coded alphabets, and the Yantra is the sketch that is used to tap their potentials to provide supernatural powers to the person who uses them.]

Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/1/5 also describes this Shambhavi Mudra. To quote—
“Verse no. 5 = [The various Mandals or subtle divisions of the sky that are discernible by a Yogi while he meditates by the Shambhavi Mudra are described in this verse. This Mudra or sitting posture is briefly described in Brahman 1, section 3, verse nos. 4-5 as well as in Brahman 3, section 1, verse no. 1.]

The first division of the sky or space outside the body is called ‘Agni Mandal’ (or the sky which has the fire element present in it as its integral part; this is the sky just above the earth’s surface because it is here one feels hot, and it is in the atmosphere of the earth that fire can be lit).

The second division beyond it is called ‘Surya Mandal’ (or the sky where the splendorous sun is located; the solar space of the entire solar system).

In the center of this (i.e. in the middle of the solar system) is the sky where the nectar-like (i.e. soothing and peace providing) moon is located. The sky around the moon is called the ‘Chandra Mandal’.

Located in it is the glorious and magnificent abode of the eternal, immutable and truthful Brahm which is radiant, splendorous and brightly illuminated. It is called ‘Brahm Mandal’, and it has the dazzling illumination that resembles a bright streak of lightening.

These divisions of the sky are visible during the meditative posture known as Shambhavi Mudra (5).

[Note—During the meditation posture called Shambhavi Mudra, the ascetic observes these subtle skies and their changing colours. First he sees a blazing fire, then it changes into a ball of fire resembling the sun, then this ball cools down to resemble the disc of the moon, and finally this metamorphoses into a flickering filament with the intensity of an electric discharge.]

The Shambhavi Mudra has also been described in *Advai Tarak Upanishad* of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 12.

(ii) The *Khechari Mudra*—The word Khechari is derived from the root ‘Khe’ which stands for the sky, and ‘Chari’ means to move, to wonder or to roam. Therefore, the combined word ‘Khechari’ means one who can move in the sky.

This Mudra has been graphically described in Gherand Sanhita, Chapter 3, verse no. 25-28, besides the Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 40-42, the entire Canto 2 of the Yog Kundalini Upanishad; and Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 81-93 of Krishna Yajur Veda; as well as in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 52-64 of the Sam Veda tradition, in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 2/1/8 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, and in Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 7, verse nos. 14-17, 39-42/2. The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 5, verse no. 78 also refers to it.

The *Khechari Mudra* is amongst the best and toughest body postures that can be adopted by any ascetic, but at the same time it can empower the practitioner with stupendous mystical and occult powers and potentials. It involves elongation of the tongue by constantly pulling it out and making it flexible by constant flexing, rolling and shaking from side to side. The nerves and veins at the lower end of the tongue, i.e. in its tendon, are cut so as to make them senseless. To obtain success in this, the tongue is smeared with butter and stretched by holding it with an iron tong. This results in the tongue getting sufficiently elongated as to reach the inner opening of the mouth by inverting it backwards, and then it is tucked at the base of the upper palate to close the opening of the nostrils at the roof of the mouth cavity. When the elongated and backwards bent tongue is stuffed here, these openings of the nostrils are closed by it, thereby blocking the flow of air (breath). Meanwhile, the sight is fixed unwaveringly at a point midway between the two eyebrows.

It is believed that the Khechari Mudra, along with the Vajroli Mudra, was made popular by sage Matyseyanandranath (10th century CE), the great ascetic of medieval times and the moral preceptor of the famed ascetic Guru Gorakhnath.

The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 2, paragraph no. 18 says, while describing the ‘Sri Chakra’ (worship wheel) of Goddess Tripura, that the Goddess sits in the seventh ring of the said Chakra in the Khechari Mudra.

The *Khechari Mudra* is also called *Vaishnavi Mudra* according to Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 7, verse nos. 14-17½ which also describes the Khechari Mudra as follows—

“Verse no. 14 = The ‘Vaishnavi Mudra’ (posture of one or the other individual organs of the body) is one in which the ascetic’s internal sight (i.e. his thoughts and sub-conscious mind) is focused on his spiritual objective, and his external sight is fixed in such a way that his eyelids stop flapping (closing and opening). This is the Mudra that is recognized and lauded by all the scriptures dealing with Tantra form of ritualistic worship as the secret of spiritual success and the one that aids the aspirant in obtaining his objectives (14).

“Verse no. 15 = The ascetic whose vital winds and sub-conscious become one while his thoughts are focused internally in contemplation during meditation (i.e. when he adopts

the Keval Kumbhak and stops to breathe; when he is not even aware whether or not his body is inhaling or exhaling air so much is he submerged in meditation), and at the same time his motionless and half-open eyes look blankly downwards at an imaginary spot in his front, but do not see anything else—verily, this state is called the ‘Khechhari Mudra’.

[In other words, during this Mudra, the internal component of the mind called the sub-conscious, and the external component called the conscious aspect of the mind are both in a state of non-activity and neutrality. The ascetic is so lost in meditation and contemplation that he forgets to even breathe, and though his eyes are half-open he sees nothing because his mind is defunct. It is the mind that registers any sight when it interprets the incoming sensory impulses gathered by the organ of sight known as the eye. The eye merely gathers the impulses that are analyzed and interpreted in the brain as a ‘sight’ of an object. It is the brain or the mind that actually ‘sees’ something, and the eye is merely an instrument to gather information about objects that have a physical form, colour and dimension, and then transfer this information to the brain and let it interpret as sight of that object.]

Since during this Khechhari Mudra the ascetic is focused on the ‘self’ which is the auspicious Atma and the pure consciousness, since his inner being and external being have merged into one unit and harmonized with each other, this Mudra is also known as Vaishnavi Mudra. [In other words, both the terms apply to the same Mudra, and in both the cases the aim of doing this Mudra is auspicious and holy.]

When this Mudra is successfully done, the practitioner is able to experience the presence of the supreme and self-illuminated divine entity that is so unique and paradoxical that it cannot be limited by either defining it as being a ‘Shunya’ or as being ‘A-shunya’.

[The divine entity that is implied here is the ‘consciousness’ that resides in the subtle inner self of all living beings as their Atma or their pure ‘self’. The word ‘Shunya’ literally means a void or vacuum or non-existence, implying something that is as subtle and sublime as for instance the air element or the sky element that are surely present but cannot be seen, touched or grasped to ascertain their physical existence. On the other hand, the word ‘A-shunya’ is the opposite of ‘Shunya’—i.e. it is an object that is not subtle, and therefore it is gross. In other words, the entity referred to here is so unique that it possesses paradoxical qualities—it is both subtle as well as gross, and at the same time it is neither subtle nor gross. It is beyond definitions; it transcends fixed boundaries and criterions. Its existence cannot be denied, but at the same time there is no method of physically testing it in material terms to prove its existence. All these criterions apply on the Atma—it is a subtle entity that no one can ever see but without which both the gross body consisting of the external sense organs, as well as the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect complex of the creature would be of no consequence. The vital winds that are called Pran remain active in the body because of this undefined ‘consciousness’. A dead body too is filled with the wind, but does it show any life? A balloon is filled with air, but can it be called a living being?

Hence, the supreme essence of life that ‘illuminates’ this dark world by infusing it with ‘life’ is the divine entity experienced when the ascetic is successful in doing Vaishnavi or Khechhari Mudra.] (15).

“Verse nos. 16 = An ascetic who remains steadily concentrated on his meditative posture (of Khechari Mudra as outlined in verse no. 15) as evident from his unblinking and half-open eyes, with the mind and the sub-conscious focused on his spiritual objective, and the sight steadfastly fixed on the tip of the nose, is able to attain steadiness and stability in his meditation. When he is successful in attaining this stage, he is now deemed to be ready to exercise control even over his Surya Naadi (i.e. the Pingla Naadi or the right nostril) and the Chandra Naadi (i.e. the Ida Naadi or the left nostril) so much so that the flow of life-forces (vital airs) through them is stopped by him and they become defunct for all practical purposes.

[In other words, once Khechari Mudra is successfully practiced, the ascetic is now able to implement the next phase of Yoga—and it is to stop the flow of air or wind through the nostrils. He can now stop breathing, and this means that he can exist in a state of perpetual ‘Keval Kumbhak’ (refer verse no. 13/5) when the inhaled air is held inside the body for prolonged periods of time without the need to exhale it. The ascetic does not feel suffocated or bloated at all. The trapped vital winds begin to circulate freely inside the body.]

The extremely sublime, most subtle and indefinable entity on which the ascetic has focused his attention while undertaking this process of Yoga, which is the aim of his spiritual pursuit for which he has stepped on this path in the first place, is a divine entity, a sublime essence called the ‘Tattwa’ that is self-illuminated, radiant and glorious. This ‘Tattwa’ (the sublime essence) is devoid of all forms of grossness that are associated with all external things in this world of material sense objects.

Oh Shandilya! You must know it in this truthful way (16).

“Verse no. 17 = The ascetic focuses the pupils of his eyes on the sublime light or illumination that glows on the tip of his nose during his meditative posture as described above. He is in a completely relaxed state of the mind, and when he views this glorious light and focuses his eyes on it, the eyebrows are slightly raised in a stance that indicates his extreme sense of stunned astonishment and exhilaration at being able to visualize this sublime light that is not ordinarily visible and at being able to experience the thrill and ecstasy that accompanies this exalted state of existence.

This is the preliminary stage of his spiritual practices, and it helps him to obtain the ‘Unmani’¹ state in a short time (17).

[Note—¹The *Unmani* state is a higher and exalted state of existence of the consciousness when it rises above the mundane and the gross, and lives in a sublime state. The word itself has two connotations—one is to rise and lift up, and other is to become indifferent to things that are gross and unattractive. The ascetic who practices the form of Yoga outlined in this Upanishad is able to ‘lift’ his ‘self’ from the gross level of existence, ‘rise up’ and reach an exalted state of existence when he is able to ‘see’ the sublime Tattwa, or experience the presence in his own inner self the eclectic entity that is the essence of existence and which in common parlance of Vedanta and metaphysics is known as the ‘conscious self’ or the pure conscious Atma. This Atma is the essence or the Tattwa that is self-illuminated and that is witnessed in the higher stages of Yoga as described in this verse. It is the realisation of this Atma that is the aim of all spiritual pursuits, and it is this realisation of the Atma that is the cosmic Truth known as Brahm which gives the feeling of unmatched exhilaration and ecstasy to the ascetic. That is why he is stunned and his eyebrows are raised in a crooked stance. He had never ever experienced this scintillating

source of light earlier in his life, and when he actually 'sees' it, he is taken by surprise and utterly stunned and dazzled by its mere presence.]

“Verse no. 17/1. Since this eclectic state is easily reached when one successfully practices the Khechhari Mudra, it is advisable for all spiritual aspirants to implement this Mudra.

He first reaches the Unmani state of eclectic existence, and then progresses to reach a higher and more sublime state of exalted existence called ‘Yog-Nidra’¹.

A successful aspirant who has achieved the state of Yog-Nidra—or when he can assume the virtual state of remaining asleep vis-à-vis this gross world and the gross body while being active in doing Yoga—acquires such stupendous mystical powers and potentials that he no longer remains under the jurisdiction of Kaal, or the factor of time and circumstance. [In other words, the state of beatitude and felicity that he reaches, the bliss and spiritual ecstasy that he experiences are not limited to the time till he does Yoga. They become perpetual for him; they become a part of his life. He can conquer death and decay because he can now control his breath and remain in the state of Keval Kumbhak as described in verse nos. 16 and 13/5 respectively.] (17/1).

[Note—¹The word ‘Yog’ of course means meditation and contemplation, while the word ‘Nidra’ means to sleep. Hence, the combined word *Yog-Nidra* implies that eclectic state of existence in which the aspirant is virtually ‘asleep’, i.e. he is in a state of suspended animation when all his external organs are literally defunct, his mind does not register any external impulses, and his sub-conscious too goes into hibernation while doing Yoga. He is not actually sleeping in the conventional sense because he is actively doing Pranayam and Khechhari Mudra of Yoga, but ‘virtually’ sleeping. This ‘sleeping’ or ‘Nidra’ state that is obtained as a result of ‘Yoga’ is named after the latter—i.e. it is called ‘Yog-Nidra’. While in the case of ordinary sleep the man’s mind is active as it might dream of an imaginary world, but in the case of Yog-Nidra, there is no such world. Hence, the latter closely resembles the third state of conscious existence called the Sushupta state because in both the cases the mind and the sub-conscious are defunct or relegated to the background and the man lives in a state of virtual non-existence.

The difference between the Yog-Nidra and the Sushupta state of existence are two-fold—(i) One is that while the latter case is part of the process of physical sleep when the eyes are closed shut and the man neither visualizes or experiences anything, in the former case this is not true as the eyes are half-open, the practitioner sees a source of light at the tip of his nose, and he is not asleep in the conventional sense of the term ‘Nidra’. While a man is actually asleep during the Sushupta state, also called the ‘deep sleep state of consciousness’, as this state is reached after crossing the Swapna or dreaming state of a man’s sleep, in the case of Yog-Nidra the body is not asleep and even the eyes are half open.

And (ii) the Sushupta state is short-lived as sooner or later the sleeping man reverts to his old ways of life when he wakes up, being subjected to all sorts of mental turmoil and agonies, remains engrossed and submerged in the material world of grossness and has no idea of spiritual ecstasy and bliss, but in the Yog-Nidra state this situation does not arise. Since here the breath is stopped as described in verse no. 16, and the ascetic is able to maintain a stable state of the vital winds by being in a Keval Kumbhak state as described in verse no. 13/5 as a result of stoppage of breath, the Yog-Nidra can last indefinitely. Since this stage is reached by practice of certain stringent exercises of Yoga, e.g. the Khechhari Mudra and Pranayam, the ascetic becomes trained enough to maintain the

calmness and peace of his mind even when he is not actually practicing the Yoga or is in the eclectic state of Yog-Nidra.

In other words, the experience of bliss, the state of mental peace, the sense of spiritual ecstasy, beatitude and accomplishment etc. that he finds in the Yog-Nidra state becomes natural to him and it lasts even if he wakes up from his meditative trance as compared to ordinary sleep when he might reach the Sushupta state or the deep sleep state of consciousness for some moments but when he wakes up to the realities of this physical world he forgets his earlier state of peaceful existence and begins to be tossed and turned by the events of this world.]”

The *Beej Mantra* of Khechhari Yoga has been described in Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 17-20, and Canto 3, verse no. 1. Now, let us examine what this Beej Mantra is.

“Canto 2, verse no. 17 = [Verse nos. 17-20 describe the Beej Mantra for doing Khechhari Mudra of Yoga.]

A successful aspirant is able to become a leader of the Gods who roam in the sky; he obtains free access to the sky and can roam in it as he wishes¹.

Now, the primary Beej Mantra² of Khechhari is being described. The Sanskrit alphabet ‘Ha’ represents the ‘Khechar’ aspect of this Mantra. [That is, the seed letter ‘Ha’ of the Mantra is the esoteric formula which injects into the main Mantra the mystical power that would enable the person who has mastered this Mantra’s use to be able to fly or float in the sky or space.]

Similarly, the alphabet ‘Ee’ (as pronounced in *eel*, *keen*, *feel*), which is the long vowel sound and the fourth vowel of the Sanskrit language, represents the Dharna. [That is, this alphabet ‘Ee’ represents a firm determination and unwavering resolution on the part of the aspirant for obtaining success in this knowledge and its implementation. It indicates his steadfastness of purpose and his ability to keep this Mantra in memory at all times during his sojourn in the sky. This is important, for should he forget it, he would fall back immediately. This is like an air plane pilot always remembering the intricate science of flying and running the air plane during flight, for otherwise it is impossible to fly a huge plane and to meet emergencies should they occur. There is no time to consult books in flight; it would be absolutely incredulous even to think in this term! It is also like the jet engine of a plane which is revving up for take-off.]

The fire element is represented by the alphabet ‘Ra’, and the water element by the ‘Anuswar’ (the dot placed on the top of an alphabet to give it the nasal sound)³.

The combined effect is the creation of the mystically charged esoteric letter ‘Hrim or Hring’. The seed/root monosyllable Mantra Hrim or Hring stands for the ‘Shakti’ element of creation. This represents the cosmic energy and divine powers of creation which regulates everything in existence. It is therefore used to invoke the divine energy and seek its intercession on the behalf of the aspirant who uses this Mantra for worship. (17).

[Note—¹An aspirant who practices Khechhari Yoga in a holistic manner along with the relevant Mantra dedicated to it is deemed to be as exalted as the Gods. He is not subjected to any of the physical limitations and grossness experienced by ordinary creatures whose movements are limited by the principles of physics because they have a gross body with fixed dimensions, weight, contour, constituent parts etc. For instance, it is not possible for any human being to float in the air without any aid as is a normal

practice for the Gods, but Khechari Yoga enables him to achieve this super-human and magical feat.

An ordinary creature's physical compulsion of having to be limited to the ground and his inability to lift himself up and float in the air is symbolic of the fact that he is eternally bound to this mundane world of material sense objects, trapped and shackled to it for life. He lacks the will and the wherewithal to break free from this fetter. Yoga empowers him; it provides him with the necessary conducive environment and the instrument which can enable him to do so—to break free from the fetters of the body as well as the world and find his ultimate liberation and deliverance. By being able to float in the air due to success in Khechari Yoga, the aspirant should understand its great spiritual import and significance. He must realise that it indicates he has risen above the ordinary and mundane, and instead has attained an exalted spiritual stature where liberation and deliverance is just round the corner.

There is another way of looking at Khechari Yoga and its potential powers to make its followers equivalent to the exalted Gods. There are five basic elements—viz. earth, water, fire, air and sky in this order of subtlety, with the earth being the least subtle and the most gross, and the sky being the most subtle and the least gross. The ordinary life of miseries and pains where the aspirant remains engrossed in this world, when he has not yet stepped on the path of Yoga symbolises this earth element. He is like an ordinary creature rooted to the earth and unable to break free from its shackles and find freedom or the ability to lift himself up from the quagmire in which he has landed. On the other extreme end is the sky element symbolised by his ability to float in the air which he achieves by doing Khechari Yoga.

The air element is very much like the sky element and only slightly less subtle as is evident from the fact that it is only the air element that is able to fill the entire space of the sky as compared to other three elements. So, when the aspirant is able to practice Pranayam which indicates his ability to control the air element, it is deemed that he has obtained full control over this element of creation.

The next hurdle is the control of the water element which is done by practicing the various Bandhas, especially the Jalandhar Bandha which indicates his ability to directly overcome the hurdles created by the water element.

The fiercest and the most untamable of the five elements is the fire element. This is done by controlling the Kundalini and harnessing its stupendous energy during Yoga as described in the present Upanishad.

With these controls in place it is more than clear that there is little to differentiate between the practitioner of Yoga and the Gods. Such a person is indeed no less powerful than the Gods. He is deemed to have acquired the powers and virtues possessed by the Gods.

²The *Beej* Mantras are also called the seed or root Mantras. The word *Beej* refers to the fundamental, essential, elementary part of the Mantra. They are monosyllables which encrypt all the divine, spiritual, mystical and eclectic powers, potentials and authority possessed by the patron deity for which that particular *Beej* Mantra is meant. These *Beej* Mantras are used in formal ritualistic worship, as during fire sacrifices, in occult forms of worship when worship instruments consisting of geometrical lines and figures, called the *Yantra*, are employed much like we have the circuit diagrams in an electronic instrument, as well as for doing *Japa* or constant repetition of a particular letter or word or phrase having divine and mystical qualities in order to invoke their powers and potentials for the benefit of the aspirant, and meditation and contemplation. These *Beej* Mantras are added as a prefix or suffix to the main Mantra to enhance and multiply its effects and potentials. For example, the root/seed/*Beej* Mantra 'Ra' stands for Lord Ram as well as the fire element. In other words, when it is used

during a formal form of worship, it would boost the effect of the main Mantra of Lord Ram as well as subtly inject it with the stupendous and magnificent powers of 'fire'.

They are monosyllables and are much like the alphabets used in science and mathematical equations to denote other elements or factors. They encrypt great secret powers of creation in them, and must be pronounced and used properly even as the different alphabets standing for different atoms in organic chemistry must be properly placed at their designated places to make any sense out of them; otherwise the entire complex chemical compound represented by these monosyllable alphabets would be meaningless. Even in algebra, we use alphabets to denote certain things, and then go on calculating on the basis of these hypothetical assumptions to arrive at conclusive results. This system is used in all spheres of science. Therefore we conclude that the use of these 'Beej' Mantras during occult practices and ritualistic forms of worship to invoke divine powers and seek results is like the time tested scientific method applied in the sphere of metaphysics.

³The fire element would be like the heat produced by the combustion of the plane's fuel which powers the engine and enables the heavier-than-air machine to leave the earth and become air borne. The water element would be like the coolants used to cool down the engine and other parts of the plane and prevent their overheating. In the case of Yoga we can visualise their practical contribution in lifting a person's body from the ground as follows—

The Khechari Mudra is practiced not in isolation but in close coordination with other Mudras and Aasans (postures) of Yoga along with Bandhas (restrictions and closures of various apertures of the body), Pranayam (breath control), Shakti Chaalan and Kundali activation etc. as described earlier in Canto 1 of this Upanishad. All these activities generate heat in the body which in turn warms up the water content of the latter and creates subtle steam. Steam has immense power as is evident when it can turn turbines that generate electricity and move the piston of huge engines that power the steam locomotive or the ship on high seas. The same thing happens here though in a different way and at a different plane. The fire let loose by activation of the Kundalini not only provides heat to warm the body's fluid contents or its water element, but also the air element. Hot air is known to rise up as is seen in hot air balloons. The combined effect of these two primary elements of Nature, water and air, getting heated is that the body is lifted from the ground much like the lifting of the hot air balloon. The Kundalini present at the lower end of the body provides the fire that keeps the air and water elements sufficiently hot and activated. Since all exit points of the body have been closed tight shut due to various Bandhas, Aasans, Mudras and Pranayam, the only option for heated air and the steam trapped inside the body is to lift the latter up.]

“Canto 2, verse no. 18-20 = The Khechari Yoga is accomplished by using this Mantra. The next part of the Mantra is as follows—The Beej Mantra representing the Som or Moon is the alphabet 'Sa' (pronounced as in *sun* or *son*). Before this is the letter 'Bha' (pronounced as in *abhor*) which is the ninth alphabet of the Sanskrit consonant when counted backwards from 'Sa', and is followed by the letter 'Ma' (pronounced as in *mother*) which is the eighth letter from 'Sa' when counted backwards. This letter 'Ma' is followed by the letter 'Pa' (pronounced as in *punk*, *pun*, *Pundit*) which is the fifth consonant when counted backwards from the letter 'Sa'. The letter 'Pa' is followed by the letter representing the Moon, i.e. the letter 'Sa' once again. The last letter in this sequence is 'Ksha' which is a combination of the letters 'Ka' (pronounced as in *kerb*, *kernel*) and 'Cha' (pronounced as in *champion*).

The resultant Mantra is the following—Hrim + Bha + Sa + Ma + Pa + Sa + Ksha = ‘Hrim Bhum Sum Mum Pum Sum Kshum’ (18-20).

[Note—The Mantras have the nasal sign ‘Anuswar’ which is represented by putting a ‘dot’ over each letter to represent the fact that they are empowered with cosmic divine powers. The Anuswar is also called the Bindu, a dot. This Bindu has great metaphysical significance as described in numerous Upanishads that deal with Yoga and Naad (the ethereal sound of creation). The concept of Naad and Bindu, called the ‘Naad Shakti’, has been explained at length in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 105, 167, 178; Canto 2, verse no. 6; Canto 3, verse nos. 2-3, 11; Canto 4, verse no. 47; Canto 5, verse no. 28; and Canto 6, verse nos. 21, 48-49, 71-73.

The relationship between the Bindu, Naad and the Mana (the mind) has been described in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 178, Canto 6, verse nos. 71-73.

The Anuswar sounds like ‘um’ in the word ‘Rum’, or like ‘ung’ as in ‘Rung’. Hence, the alphabet ‘Bha’ becomes ‘Bhum’ or ‘Bhung’, and so on and so forth.]

“Canto 3, verse no. 1 = Lord Padmaj (i.e. Brahma the creator, so-called as he was born sitting aloft a divine lotus that emerged from the navel of the Viraat Purush in his manifestation as Vishnu at the beginning of creation) said (to Lord Shiva)—‘The Melan Mantra of Khechhari is “Hrim Bhum Sum Mum Pum Sum Kshum”’. [Refer Canto 2, verse nos. 5 and 17-20 for detail.]

Oh Shiva! Please tell me what is the significance of the three cardinal days of Amaavasya (the day of the dark moon), Pratipada (the first day of each half of the lunar month), and Purnamaasi (the day of the full moon) as described in relation to this Melan Mantra’ (1).”

The *benefits* of Khechhari Yoga have been listed in—(i) Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 4, verse nos. 15-17, 39-42/2. (ii) Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-4, 21-24, 49. (iii) Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 52-64. (iv) Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 81-93. One such practical benefit is the natural way of contraception as clearly described in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 52-64; and Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 81-93.

Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 17 asserts that a practitioner of Khechhari Yoga becomes as exalted as the Gods. He is not subjected to any of the physical limitations and grossness experienced by ordinary creatures whose movements are limited by the principles of physics because they have a gross body with fixed dimensions, weight, contour, constituent parts etc. For instance, it is not possible for any human being to float in the air without any aid as is a normal practice for the Gods, but Khechhari Yoga enables him to achieve this super-human and magical feat.

An ordinary creature’s physical compulsion of having to be limited to the ground and his inability to lift himself up and float in the air is symbolic of the fact that he is eternally bound to this mundane world of material sense objects, trapped and shackled to it for life. He lacks the will and the wherewithal to break free from this fetter. Yoga empowers him; it provides him with the necessary conducive environment and the instrument which can enable him to do so—to break free from the fetters of the body as well as the world and find his ultimate liberation and deliverance. By being able to float in the air due to success in Khechhari Yoga, the aspirant should understand its great spiritual import and significance. He must realise that it indicates he has risen above the

ordinary and mundane, and instead has attained an exalted spiritual stature where liberation and deliverance is just round the corner.

There is another way of looking at Khechari Yoga and its potential powers to make its followers equivalent to the exalted Gods. There are five basic elements—viz. earth, water, fire, air and sky in this order of subtlety, with the earth being the least subtle and the most gross, and the sky being the most subtle and the least gross. The ordinary life of miseries and pains where the aspirant remains engrossed in this world, when he has not yet stepped on the path of Yoga symbolises this earth element. He is like an ordinary creature rooted to the earth and unable to break free from its shackles and find freedom or the ability to lift himself up from the quagmire in which he has landed. On the other extreme end is the sky element symbolised by his ability to float in the air which he achieves by doing Khechari Yoga.

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The next hurdle is the control of the water element which is done by practicing the various Bandhas, especially the Jalandhar Bandha which indicates his ability to directly overcome the hurdles created by the water element.

The fiercest and the most untamable of the five elements is the fire element. This is done by controlling the Kundalini and harnessing its stupendous energy during Yoga as described in the present Upanishad.

With these controls in place it is more than clear that there is little to differentiate between the practitioner of Yoga and the Gods. Such a person is indeed no less powerful than the Gods. He is deemed to have acquired the powers and virtues possessed by the Gods.

The *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, 2/1/8 describes this Khechari Mudra. To quote—

“Verse no. 8 = In this way, when the mind and heart, called the Mana, is deeply engrossed and firmly established in a natural state of uninterrupted and pristine pure bliss and happiness, it is said to be the successful culmination of the Shambhavi Mudra. This eclectic state in which the Yogi establishes himself is also known as the *Khechari Mudra* (8).

[Note—Refer *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 79-88 which also describes this Mudra in detail.]

The *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 78^{1/2}—90^{1/2} describes the Khechari Mudra as follows—

“Verse nos. 79-80 = The ‘Khechari Mudra’¹ is that in which the tongue is inverted and tucked inside the mouth near the upper palate, and the sight is fixed at a point between the two eyebrows. When the Yoga practitioner is able to gain expertise in doing this Mudra, he is able to acquire astounding mystical powers that are supernatural and empowers him with great potentials. By successfully accomplishing it, the ascetic has no fear from being tormented by excessive desire to sleep, hunger, thirst and fear (78^{1/2}—80). [77-80].

[Note—¹The *Khechari Mudra* is amongst the best and toughest body postures that can be adopted by any ascetic, but at the same time it can empower the practitioner with stupendous mystical and occult powers and potentials. The word ‘Khechari’ is derived from the root ‘Khe’ which stands for the sky, and ‘Chari’ means to move, to wonder or to roam. Therefore the combined word ‘Khechari’ means one who can move in the sky.

It involves elongation of the tongue by constantly pulling it out and making it flexible by constant rotation. The nerves and veins at the lower end are cut so as to make it senseless. To obtain success in this, the tongue is smeared with butter and stretched by holding it with an iron tong. This results in the tongue getting sufficiently elongated as to reach the inner opening of the mouth by inverting it backwards, and then it is tucked inside the rear of the mouth at the back of the hind part of the upper palate, at the spot where the wind pipe, the food pipe and the mouth cavity converge in the throat. It is generally believed that it greatly helps in focusing attention. It also helps to conquer hunger, sleep, greed, unconsciousness or numbness of the sense organs, and keeps the practitioner alert and focused, etc. The apparent difference between Khechari and Shambhavi Mudras is that in the latter the tongue is not tucked inside the mouth cavity, and is therefore easier to practice. Meanwhile, the sight is fixed unwaveringly at a point midway between the two eyebrows. This Mudra has been graphically described in Gherand Sanhita, Chapter 3, verse no. 25-28, besides the Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 52-64 of the Sam Veda tradition, and Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 2/1/8 .]

“Verse nos. 81-84 = A wise and erudite person who is an expert practitioner of Khechari Mudra is not tormented by epilepsy or fainting disease, nor by any other type of disease. He is also freed from getting entangled in the web of deeds and their consequences.

A person whose attention is diverted upwards towards higher planes and values of existence (i.e. when he attains spiritual elevation and supernatural powers) symbolically enabling him to float in the sky and soar higher into it, and whose tongue has been bridled and reined in (or tamed by tucking it inside the roof of the mouth, symbolising his control over his speech and the ability to remain silent for prolonged periods of time), is said to be possessed of great mystical and occult powers that are made available to him by the brilliant good effects of Khechari Mudra so much so that he cannot be tied any longer by any of the fetters of Kaal (time, age and circumstance) that are so strong that rarely anyone is freed from their clutches. [That is, he is able to cut through the web of ordinary existence by rising much higher than the mundane and possessing such mystical supernatural powers and potential that he can achieve goals that are not ordinarily possible for ordinary living beings.]

This is why this Khechari Mudra is so much lauded and applauded by experienced and acclaimed ascetics.

It is so potent that a person who has mastered this art can withhold his sperms from being ejaculated even while having sexual intercourse with a woman¹. And as long as the life-giving sperm is held inside the body, say how can he fear from death and its chance appearance?² (81-84).

[Note—¹Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda, verse nos. 57-59 which explicitly describe and reiterates this fact. Refer also to Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 6, Brahman 4, verse no. 9-11.

²That is, so long as a ascetic is able to exert sufficient control over his vital life forces and energy form being frittered away in sensual gratification, he would preserve sufficient stamina and vitality to maintain his health in a prime state, thereby eluding

death for as long as is practically possible. This verse should not be wrongly construed to mean that he would never die, for this is incongruous even to imagine as everything that has come into being in this gross world would certainly come to an end some or the other day. The idea is to lead a healthy and productive life free from diseases which generally attack a body made feeble by dissipation of vital forces of life in the body such as happens by over-indulgence in sensual pleasures, whether it be related to overeating, sexual indulgences or any other sphere of physical activity that puts a strain on the vital energy of the body.]

“Verse nos. 85-88 = If the sperm inadvertently ejects into the womb of the woman even while the man is in the Khechari Mudra, then it is possible to suck it back from the womb if the man is well versed and an expert practitioner of this Mudra.

The cells bearing life are of two types—one is white coloured and the other is blood coloured. The white coloured ones are called ‘sperms of the male’, while the red coloured ones are called the ‘egg of the female’, called so because it is embedded in the vaginal fluid which resembles blood. This female fluid is called ‘Maharaj’ (the vaginal fluid), while the male fluid is called ‘Shukra’ (semen).

The red hot life bearing cells called the Maharaj is present in the womb, while the male cell is located in the testicles called ‘Chandra’ because of its white colour and its dangling nature outside the body in the scrotum. Obviously, their union is rare and very difficult to bring about.

The male sperm is said to be a personification of the Moon God and Lord Shiva, while the female reproductive cells are regarded as the personification of the Sun God and Shakti, the manifestation of the stupendous generative powers of creation in a personified form. (85-88).

[Note—Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 59-62 and Mandal Brahmin, 2/1/5 which expound an identical view on the subject. The semen is a white fluid just like the ambrosia of eternity and bliss that is meant for the use of Gods. It is called Amrit and is stored in the transparent celestial pitcher called the Moon—and this is why the Moon appears to be shining white in colour. The sperm helps to perpetuate creation with its magical and magnificent generative powers; hence it is used as a metaphor for eternity, fertility, perpetuity, virility, vitality, strength and stamina. Since sexual process gives immense bliss, it is also regarded as a giver of extreme bliss and ecstasy. Lord Shiva is the personified Viraat Purush, the cosmic ‘male’ of creation, so he is depicted in iconography as bearing the pitcher of sperm, i.e. the Moon, on his head.

On the other hand, the female sexual fluid is red in colour like the blood, which is again a metaphor for life and vitality besides being synonymous with energy, heat, fire and passions. It is associated with new forms of life because of the presence of blood in it. It is used as a metaphor for the ferocity of fire, its dynamism and energy. It is red-hot, so it is compared to the Sun instead of the Moon. Lord Shiva’s counter-part is called Shakti which is the Sanskrit word for energy, stamina, strength, vitality and powers. This female aspect of Shiva symbolises the creative powers represented by the ovary and its eggs along with the other female sexual organs. It’s their union called ‘Yoga’ which results in the coming into being this visible creation.]

“Verse no. 89-93—When these two, the male sperm and the female egg cell, unite, the physical body of the creature is conceived. When the mature eggs in the female ovary are activated or moved by the forces of subtle winds present inside the body, they are dislodged from the ovary and taken to the hollow cavity of the womb much like any light

thing is taken aloft in the space of the sky by the sweeping action of the strong gust of wind, such as a storm¹.

This female cell is endowed with the creative energy and heat of the Sun (because it is surrounded by blood which is red in colour and is a symbol of vitality and life, and also because the red colour is a metaphor for heat and energy as indicated by the burning fire which appears to be glowing red or orange in colour). The white 'Shukra' (sperm floating in the sperm) resembles the Moon, and the red 'Maharaj' resembles the Sun². A person who is aware of the equal importance of these two forms of life is said to be an expert and erudite ascetic who is well versed in the essential philosophy of Yoga. (89-90^{1/2}).

[Note--¹This is a metaphoric way of describing aroused sexual passions and lust in a mature woman which 'drives her madly towards sexual intercourse', fuelling her 'flight of imaginations and fancy' much like a balloon swept away by the wind. She does not bother about the consequences of this enterprise that can cast an eternal ignominy on her and taint her character for ever. She even forgets about the horrors and pains of bearing the child and the torments at child birth, so much so that she willingly goes about the entire cycle once again, more often than not in quick succession, often coaxing her partner into submission. It is usually believed that it might be possible for a man to control his sexual passions, but for a lustful woman it is almost impossible.

²The *Moon* is said to be a heavenly transparent pitcher containing Amrit, the elixir of life and eternity which is white in colour indicating its purity and divine nature. The semen resembles this Moon because it contains the sperm which is possessed with all the qualities possessed by the mythical Amrit.

Similarly, the female egg is embedded in the blood present in the female sexual organs in its cavity. This cavity is hot and sexually arousing besides being the harbinger of life and its crucible. It is therefore compared to the *Sun* which is said to provide energy and heat to all forms of life in this world.]”

The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 5, verse nos. 40-42 describe the *Khechari Mudra* and its benefits in the following words—

“Verse no. 40 = In the Khechari Mudra, the tongue is inverted and pushed up the back of the upper palate into the base of the skull. The eyesight is fixed in the center of the eyebrows (40).

“Verse no. 41 = The practitioner of Khechari Mudra sits with his head bowed. Because of the stupendous powers and strengths obtained by doing this Yoga exercise, his Amrit Tattva (referring to the semen) becomes so strong and powerful that even if it put in the fire it cannot be destroyed. The wind force¹ is also not able to sway him (41).

[Note—¹The wind is considered as one of the strongest forces in Nature as evidenced by the bevy of destruction caused by severe storms in its various forms such as tornadoes, hurricanes and cyclones etc. In the case of the body, the wind force is represented by the ten vital winds present inside the creature's body. These winds together are responsible for functioning of the body in totality. The meaning of this verse is that the practitioner of Yoga who does the Khechari Mudra is able to control his own body to such an extent that no Natural forces or natural urges can overcome him.]

“Verse no. 42 = He does not have to suffer from excessive hunger, thirst, sleep and laziness. The practitioner of Khechari Mudra of Yoga has not to fear from death (because he would have had gained full control of his vital winds or Prans, and therefore can

decide when the Pran would leave the body or whether they should leave it or not, thus effectively overcoming death because death occurs when the life giving vital wind called Pran leaves the body) (42).”

The *Yogchudamani Upanishad*, verse no.52-58 describes the *Khechari Mudra* and its benefits in the following way—

“Verse no. 52—The next general posture of the body, called ‘Mudra’, is called ‘Khechari’. This involves focusing the sight at a spot in the center of the eyebrows (above the root of the nose), the tongue is inverted backwards and tucked in the center of the palate above the gullet. [To enable the tongue to accomplish this marvelous feat by doing a backward somersault, the tongue is first elongated by constant stretching and pulling of it, piercing it and moving it in various angles to make it flexible and malleable and making it possible to physically turn it inwards and tuck it in the palate.]

“Verse no. 53—Those who know and practice this ‘Khechari Mudra’ are freed from the worries of and not troubled by diseases, death, hunger, thirst, fainting etc.

“Verse no. 54—A person who is well versed with the ‘Khechari Mudra’ does not suffer from disease, nor does he find any attraction doing worldly deeds. No obstruction, hindrances or obstacles can ever dare to go near him in his spiritual endeavours.

“Verse no. 55—All ‘Siddhas’ (i.e. those who have special mystical powers and are accomplished and attained ascetics) praise the ‘Khechari Mudra’ by practicing of which the mind and the tongue wander freely in the sky or the vast, fathomless space¹.

[Note--¹The mind with its faculty of thought manifested in the form of the faculty of speech represented by the tongue wander in the sky, i.e. the mind and its manifest form, the speech, which expresses what the mind thinks, become freed or liberated from the fetters that tie a normal creature’s mind to his gross body and through it to the physical world. He enjoys the same sense of weightless freedom, a floating sensation that a person does when for example, he is gliding in the sky, or an astronaut or a cosmonaut experiences while floating in the outer space attached to the mother space vehicle with only a tether. The aspirant Yogi who practices this ‘Khechari Mudra’ experience his mind to have attained the same type of freedom and liberation, and this experience sets him virtually free. Since he is liberated and not bound by any fetters to this world, his speech also finds freedom in the sense that it does not have to say anything to please the world. It will say only what the liberated mind wishes to express, which is the ‘truth’, as opposed to speaking falsehoods and insincere words just to appease the world seem pleasant and acceptable for it.

The word Khechari has two syllables—‘Khe’ meaning sky, space, void, and ‘Chari’ meaning roaming, wandering, sojourning. Hence, the combined word means ‘to be liberated and roam freely’.]

“Verse no. 56—The ‘Khechari Mudra’ is the focus or center or core of all the veins and capillaries which branch off to provide nourishment and nutrition to all parts of the body. [This is because the site where the muscles are kept taught for doing the ‘Khechari Mudra’ is located in the ‘Kanda’ area, and it is from the latter that all the veins and nerves branch off to all parts of the body according to Yoga philosophy.]

“Verse no. 57—The aspirant who has covered the mouth of the gullet with the tip of his tongue (see verse no. 52) does not ejaculate even after being passionately embraced by a beautiful woman.

“Verse no. 58—As long as the aspirant is engrossed in this ‘Khechhari Mudra’ posture, he does not ejaculate (literally, the ‘drops’ or ‘Bindu’ do not pass out from him; here the drops refer to semen). And as long as those ‘drops’ (of semen) remain in the body (i.e., the vital energy is preserved inside the body), what or where is the fear from death (or degeneration and loss of vitality of the body)?”

The entire Canto 2 of the *Yog Kundalini Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition is dedicated to the explanation of the *Khechhari Mudra*. The actual practice of Khechhari is explained in detail in this Canto in its verse nos. 28-49.

(iii) The *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in verse nos. 26-27 lists the *different Mudras and Bhandhas* that helps the ascetic to realise the truth about himself and helps him to research the truth of Pranav or the supreme Brahm. It says—“The various Mudras (postures of the body while doing Yoga practice; the Vijay Tantra explains the esoteric meaning of Mudra thus—‘the company of the good leads to liberation and evil company to bondages; closure of evil company is termed as Mudra’.) and Bandhas (the closure of apertures of the body through which the vital winds could escape) are the following types—Maha Mudra, Maha Bandha, Maha Vedha, Khechhari Mudra, Jalandhar Bandha, Uddiyan Bandha, and Mool Bandha. Besides these, there are three other Mudras such as Vajroli, Amaroli and Sahjoli.

With the help of these different Mudras and Bandhas, the ascetic should research, investigate and delve deeply into the esoteric and mystical aspects of Pranav (i.e. the supreme Brahm or cosmic consciousness represented by the ethereal word OM that is used during meditation as a Mantra and heard by the ascetic as a deep and resonating cosmic sound during meditation) by deeply inhaling breath, retaining it inside the body and gradually exhaling it (26-27).

[Note—The various Mudras and Bandhas have been described in detail in the various Upanishads dealing with Yoga, especially the following—Yogchudamani and Jabal Darshan (Canto 3) of the Sam Veda tradition, Trishikhi Brahmin and Mandal Brahmin (1/3/5 and 2/1/5, 8) of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, the Dhyan Bindu Upanishad (verse nos. 73-93), Brahm Vidya Upanishad (verse nos. 69-70), Yogtattva Upanishad (verse nos. 26-27), Yoga Kundalini Upanishad (Canto 1, verse no. 41-52; Canto 2), Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition (Canto 5, verse nos. 40-42), Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda (Canto 5, verse nos. 44-45), and the Amritnaad Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

(iv) *Abhaye Mudra* and *Gyan Mudra*—The According to *Dakshin Murti Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Lord Shiva is said to be sitting with his hands in two types of Mudras called the *Abhaye Mudra* (verse no. 10, 15, 19) and *Gyan Mudra* (verse no. 8, 13).

The *Abhaye Mudra*—this is the forgiving and fearlessness assuring posture in which palm is held at right angles to the wrist and held in an open position with the thumb and the four fingers held erect.

The *Gyan Mudra*—a posture in which the palm is open and held at right angle to the wrist, the thumb and the first finger form a ring and the rest of the finger are held erect and touch each other. This posture is adopted when imparting knowledge and wisdom to a disciple.

(v) The *Maha Mudra*— This Mudra has been described in the *Yogchudamani Upanishad* of Sam Veda tradition, verse no. 65-71 and *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad*, verse nos. 90^{1/2}—93.

Now let us see what these Upanishads say on this subject.

Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 65-71 describes Maha Mudra in the following words—

“Verse no. 65—The ‘Maha Mudra’ posture is one by which the network of nerves are subjected to a process known as ‘Shodhan’ which means the act of purifying them, of purging them of all impurities, cleaning and de-clogging them, disciplining their functioning and reforming and revitalising them. It also entails the control of the movement of the Sun and the Moon¹ as well as the assimilation and absorption of the essential elements into the body (to provide it with the life sustaining vital nutrients and nourishment as well as energy and vitality²).

[Note--¹The control of the Sun and the Moon is symbolic of control over the reproductive organs because they are deemed to be the receptacles of the female reproductive fluids and the male sperms respectively.

²The nourishment and absorption of vital nutrients is symbolic of the development of embryo inside the womb of the mother by absorbing nutrition for the mother.]

“Verse no. 66—[The process of doing the ‘Maha Mudra’ posture is described now—] The left leg should be folded in and its heels pressed against the anus and the groin area. The chin should be touched to the chest. The right leg should be spread straight out. The two hands should then be extended to hold the toes and the sole of this right outstretched leg. The stomach/abdomen should be first filled with inhaled air, and then this air should be slowly, gradually exhaled. This is the ‘Maha Mudra’, and the process can destroy all the ailments of the body and remove all the obstacles and hindrances in the spiritual upliftment of the seeker/aspirant Yogi.

“Verse no. 67—In the beginning of this exercise, the purification or detoxification or the unclogging of the air passages should be done. The air should be inhaled through the left nostril called ‘Chandraansha’. After that, the left nostril should be closed by the hand and the air should be inhaled through the right nostril called ‘Suryaansha’. [That is, at first the inhalation should be done by the left nostril and later on by the right nostril, and the process should be alternated so as to de-clog them both on one by one. The inhaled air is used to clear the air passages, or purge the internal organs of all the dust, pollen and other polluting particles adhering to it.] When the two passages of wind passing through these two nostrils give a uniform sound then this practice should be stopped, because it would have achieved its objective of de-clogging and purifying of the air passages.

“Verse no. 68—By doing this practice, all food, whether likable or not, delicious and tasty or not, becomes delicious and enjoyable by the Yogi. Even after over-eating or

imbibing poison, this exercise (as described in verse nos. 66 and 67) makes it (i.e. the excess food or poison eaten) as easily digestible as it were nectar. [This process helps to enhance the immune system of the body.]

“Verse no. 69—Practitioners of this potent and great Yogic exercise (i.e. Maha Mudra) are freed from the chance of contracting in future such diseases as Phthisis (T.B.), which is the disease related to the air passage, as well as from leprosy, which is a skin disease but has its origin in the disturbed digestive organs, and fistula, piles (hemorrhoids), indigestion/acidity etc., which are all digestive organs related diseases.

“Verse no. 70—This posture and Yoga exercise called ‘Maha Mudra’ gives great successes and accomplishments, but it should not be told (taught) to ineligible, incompetent or unworthy persons. It should be kept a closely guarded secret from them (because if not done under proper guidance and supervision, it might lead to catastrophic results).

“Verse no. 71—The aspirant Yogi should sit in a lonely/secluded/serene place in the ‘Padmasan’ posture with a straight spine. He should focus his sight on the tip of the nose and repeat the holy Mantras (i.e. do Japa) of the imperishable divine cosmic word known as ‘Omkar or OM’

[Note--The reader should read Jabaldarshan Upanishad, Canto 3-10 of Sam Veda tradition to fully grasp the ramification and implication of what is being said here.]

The *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 90^{1/2}-93 describes this Maha Mudra. To quote—

“Verse nos. 90-93 = The ‘Maha Mudra’ is employed to cleanse the different Naadis (tubular ducts in the body) of their impurities that clog them, disciplining their functioning and reforming and revitalizing them. The impurities that clog the Naadis are ‘Vaat’ (afflictions caused by rheumatism, gout and arthritis; problems of disturbed wind in the body), ‘Pitta’ (excessive bile formation; acidity) and ‘Vayu’ (wind or flatulence) by employing the coordinated efforts of the Sun and the Moon³. [Refer also to Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 65-70.]

The process of doing the Maha Mudra is the following—the hollow at the pit of the throat is pressed by the chin, the left leg is folded in at the knee and its heel is pressed against the genital, the body is bent forward so that the big toe of the outstretched right leg is grasped by the thumb and first fingers of both the hands, the abdomen is filled with inhaled air in the process called Khumbhak (holding it inside for roughly 1-3 minutes), and then letting it out gradually (also in another 1-3 minutes).

This process is repeated with the right leg folded in and the left stretched out. Wise and acclaimed ascetics assert that this ‘great posture of Yoga’ called the Maha Mudra is potent enough to destroy all sins and their evil consequences (90^{1/2}—93).

[Note—¹This is a metaphoric way of describing aroused sexual passions and lust in a mature woman which ‘drives her madly towards sexual intercourse’, fuelling her ‘flight of imaginations and fancy’ much like a balloon swept away by the wind. She does not bother about the consequences of this enterprise that can cast an eternal ignominy on her and taint her character for ever if such passions and natural desires are not handled by her judiciously, prudently and with propriety. She even forgets about the horrors and pains of

bearing the child and the torments at child birth along with the attendant consequences on her general health so much so that she willingly goes about the entire cycle repeatedly, more often than not in quick succession, often coaxing her partner into submission. It is usually believed that it might be possible for a man to control his sexual passions, but for a lustful woman it is almost impossible.

²The *Moon* is said to be a heavenly transparent pitcher containing Amrit, the elixir of life and eternity which is white in colour indicating its purity and divine nature. The semen resembles this Moon because it contains the sperm which is possessed with all the qualities possessed by the mythical Amrit.

Similarly, the female egg is embedded in the blood present in the cavity of the female sexual organs. This cavity is hot and sexually arousing besides being the harbinger of life and its crucible. It is therefore compared to the *Sun* which is said to provide energy and heat to all forms of life in this world. Refer note to verse nos. 85-88 above also.

³The *Sun* is a symbol and receptacle of Nature's energy, light, heat, vitality and life bestowing abilities as is evident from the fact that life would be extinguished without the presence of the Sun. Likewise, the *Moon* is said to be a receptacle of Amrit, the ambrosia of Gods that gives fertility and eternity.

In the present context, the coordination of the Sun and the Moon to de-clog the blocked and congested Naadis and revitalize them implies that the 'Maha Mudra'—so called because it is the 'great posture of Yoga'—can enable the ascetic to harness the dynamic energy of creation symbolised by the Moon and the Sun, standing for the male generative powers and the female generative powers respectively, which is present inside the body itself in the form of different Chakras (whirling subtle energy centers of the body) and the Kundalini (the coiled serpent-like energy center at the base of the spine), and which flows in the various Naadis (ducts) of the body once it is unleashed. This energy helps to revitalize and energise the Naadis, scrubbing them and reactivating them along with the other tissues of the body, and ridding them of their impurities and toxins. The entire process rejuvenates the entire body of the practitioner. That is why an ascetic who practices Maha Mudra is able to render himself free from all sorts of bodily ailments and chronic diseases—refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 69 which is very specific and explicit on this point.]”

(vi) *Bandha Mudra*—The *Brahm Vidya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 69-70 describes the Bandha Mudra as follows—

“Verse nos. 69-70. In the beginning, the aspirant should practice the Mudra (meditative posture) called ‘Bandha’¹.”

The fire element has three subtle forms and three symbolic locations in the body. Thus, the fire element in the first letter ‘A’ (of the divine ethereal word OM) has its location in the tip of the nose and in both the eyes. The fire element in the second letter ‘U’ (of the divine ethereal word OM) has its location in the heart. And finally, the fire element in the third letter ‘M’ (of the divine ethereal word OM) has its location in the middle of the two eyebrows.

The energy and vitality, the strength and stamina of the Pran Shakti or the vital winds present in the body should be injected in these fire elements. [It is like igniting the latent and dormant fire element that is inherently present inside the body at these three symbolic sites where the fire pit of the sacred fire sacrifice that is being symbolically done by the medium of Yoga as mentioned in verse no. 54 is located by blowing air or vital wind into it.]

The Brahm Granthi (the knot or specific site where Brahm is said to have his seat) is said to be located in the region at the tip of the nose as well as in the eyes. Similarly, the Vishnu Granthi (where Vishnu is said to have his base) is located in the subtle heart² (69-70).

[Note—¹The *Bandha Mudra* pertains to the Baddha Aasan. It is described in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 40. It is literally a closed or tied form of Padmasan when, after sitting in a normal or common form of Padmasan posture, the big toe of the left foot is held by the right hand, and that of the right foot is held by the left hand. [In this posture, the hands are taken behind the back, and the clasping of the toe of the opposite side is done from behind. To felicitate this posture, the spine will have to be curved backwards a bit. The hands and legs are virtually 'bound or tied' to each other. That is why it is called 'Baddha' or tied or closed form of Padmasan.

²The word Granthi means a node, a nodule or module or knot. It also symbolises the center of power and authority because it is the nodal point from where all the authority needed for governance spread out. It is also like the seat of power and authority of a king, much like the strong fortress from where he rules over the kingdom. The Granthis mentioned in this Upanishad should be seen in this context. They represent the nodal points in the body where the Trinity Gods have their symbolic residence, and it is from here they control the functioning of the body of the individual as well as everything that he thinks and does. If the individual is regarded as the microcosm of the entire creation, then the Atma would be the supreme Brahm, and the various patron deities of the organs would be the different Gods of creation.

Brahm is synonym of Gyan which is knowledge of the truth and possession of the highest degree of erudition, sagacity, enlightenment and wisdom. Since these are the functions of the brain located in the head, the seat of Brahm in the *Brahm Granthi* is said to be here. Knowledge helps to remove the darkness of ignorance, i.e. it is like symbolic opening of the eyes so that the man can see the truth the light of enlightenment and wisdom. Therefore the eyes are also the locations of Brahm Granthi.

In the same vein, Vishnu is the sustainer, protector and nourisher of the world. Compassion, graciousness, love, mercy, benevolence, magnanimity, kindness etc. are some of the eclectic virtues that must be present in a person who is responsible or charged with looking after a huge and extended family which consists of all sorts of members. Since these virtues are the functions of the heart, Vishnu's seat or *Vishnu Granthi* is located here.]”

The *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 112-116 describes the *Maha Mudra* or *Maha Bandha* as follows—

“Verse no. 112 = [Now certain sitting postures to be adopted for the purpose doing Yoga to attain the benefits listed in this Upanishad are being described.]

The practitioner of Yoga should sit in such a way that he presses his genital with the heels of his left leg and stretches the right leg straight in front of him. Then he should firmly clasp the big toe of this (right) leg with both his hands (112).

“Verse no. 113 = The chin is to be brought close to the chest. Sitting in this posture, he should pull in the air (i.e. breathe in air) slowly (i.e. do 'Purak') and hold it inside the body during the phase called Kumbhak as long as he can. Then this air should be gradually exhaled during the phase called Rechak (113).

“Verse no. 114 = This process should be repeated with the other side of the body. That is, after completing the cycle of inhalation-holding-exhalation of breath while the left leg is folded inwards at the knee-joint and the right leg stretched out, the process should be repeated with the right leg folded inwards at the knee-joint and its heels pressing against the genital, and the left leg stretched out and its big toes firmly clasped by both the hands. Thereafter, the breathing ritual is repeated once again.

Thus, the two steps of this exercise are alternated with each other for as long as the ascetic wishes to do Yoga (114).

“Verse no. 115-116 = This exercise and sitting posture is called *Maha-Bandh*. The two ways mentioned above—i.e. one in which the genital is pressed with the heel of the left leg, and other when it is pressed with the heel of the right leg, are both called *Maha-Bandh*¹.

An ascetic who is sitting in this *Maha-Bandh* can withhold the air inside the body and prevent its escape from it by pulling in the muscles of the throat so as to close the opening of the upper end of the trachea, and at the same time constrict the nostrils to aid in the process² (115-116).

[Note—¹The word ‘Bandh’ means to close and restrict. Since the escape of Pran in the form of vital winds is closed in this and other such Bandhs, they are so named. The present Bandh is called ‘Maha’ because it is a ‘great’ closure.

²It must be noted that both his hands are tied in clasping the toe of the respective leg, and therefore they are not free to clamp the nostril to stop the air from forcing itself out as is usually done during normal breath control exercise called Pranayam. Therefore he must constrict the muscles of the throat and the nostrils voluntarily to close the opening of the mouth and the nostrils to effectively block the escape of air.]

Bandha Mudra is also described in *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 40.

(vii) The *Vipreet Karan Mudra* or *Vajorli Mudra*—This has been described in brief in *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 98, and in great detail in *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 122-126.

We shall now see what the *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 122-126 says on this matter—

“Verse no. 122 = Now, the special Mudra called ‘Vipreet-karan Mudra¹’ is being narrated. This is said to destroy or eliminate all kinds of diseases and obstacles that the ascetic might be facing and tormented by (122).

[Note--¹The word ‘Vipreet’ means that which is against the conventional norm, or which goes against the criterions of normal behaviour. In the present case the movement of the vital winds has been reversed, i.e. the Pran has a normal tendency to come in and go out from the nostrils, and the Apaan continuously moves downwards and never upwards. With the practice of above Bandhs and Mudras as described in verse nos. 112-122, the normal movement of the vital winds is tampered with. They are made to act against their normal behaviour. Hence, this process is compositely called ‘Vipreet-karan’, i.e. to make them behave against their natural pattern.

According to this Upanishad however, the Vipreet-karan is a different process as described below in verse no. 124. According to Patanjali’s Yog Sutra, this is known as ‘Sarwaang Aasan’, literally the posture of Yoga that benefits the whole body. Obviously

this terminology is also applicable to this process because if the digestive organs function properly and a man is able to digest food properly and derive nutrition from it, it is natural that his entire body would benefit.]

“Verse no. 123 = By practicing this Vipreet-karan Yoga, the practitioner’s weakened hunger and the energy to digest food is re-kindled and rejuvenated, resulting in increase of appetite and the ability to digest more food (123).

“Verse no. 124 = The fire of hunger once stoked by this Mudra must be duly supplied with fuel in the form of food, for otherwise it would burn the reserve fuel of the body, resulting in emaciation.

To do this Vipreet-karan Mudra, the head is kept low and the both the legs are lifted up simultaneously. This posture is practiced for a few moments the first day. [For this purpose, the practitioner lies flat on the ground and raises the legs slowly upwards. This automatically would exert an inward and upward pull on the abdominal and intestinal muscles and strengthen them besides helping the Apaan wind to move upwards through the Shushumna Naadi. Since the direction of the flow of the Apaan wind is reversed, and the legs are so positioned that their level is above that of the head which is an unconventional position under normal circumstances for a body lying flat on the ground, this posture is so named as ‘Vipreet-karan’.] (124).

“Verse no. 125 = From the second day onwards, the time for which this Vipreet-karan Mudra is practiced is increased gradually on a day to day basis (along with the angle of lifting of the legs, till the time they are held at right angles to the ground). This should be practiced for a minimum period of six months by the time of which the wrinkles on the body of the practitioner vanish and the graying of his hairs stop (125).

“Verse no. 126 = The ascetic who practices this (Vipreet-karan Mudra) for one Prahar (three hours) daily, he is able to subdue Kaal. That is, he is able to conquer death because his body becomes strong, sturdy and robust, he is able to digest and benefit from food eaten, and his body gets de-toxified.

This is also called the ‘Vajroli Mudra¹’ because it makes him as strong, sturdy, robust and vigorous as Vajra, the invincible and strong weapon of Indra, the king of Gods. One who practices this Mudra daily is soon becomes an accomplished Yogi who is said to have mastered all the Siddhis (esoteric, eclectic and mystical divine powers) (126).

[Note—¹It is pertinent to note here that all these Aasans and Mudras are inter-linked and not detached from one another. They are inter-dependent and not mutually excluding. They form part of a comprehensive and composite process called Yoga which can bestow the mystical powers called Siddhis to the practitioner. Various Yoga texts depict variations in the way they are done, and sometimes there is a lot of confusion. For example, the Vipreet-karan Mudra as described in this Upanishad is different from how Patanjali has described them. In his description, the particular way this Mudra is done as per this Upanishad is called ‘Saalamba Sarwaang Aasan’. Similarly, the Vajroli Mudra as implied here is different from the way the Vajra Aasan is done according to Patanjali. So, instead of getting confused with the intricacies and details of what this text says and what that says, the ascetic should understand the hidden esoteric philosophy and the idea behind the exercise by understanding the meaning of the word and its broader

implications and how is it to be applied in practice to benefit him. If the basic concepts are firmly grasped, the details can be adjusted according to individual needs and circumstances.

If we go strictly by Patanjali's version of Aasans, then 'Vajra Aasan' is the posture whereby the body is bent backwards to such an extent that the head rests on the upturned soles of the two legs that are bent inwards at the knee-joints so that the ankle-joint and heels are tucked underneath the buttock of the respective side and the weight of the body rests on the tucked-in legs. For this, the practitioner sits on the ground with his two legs bent inwards from the knee. He bends the body backwards like a bow so that the head rests on the sole of the feet pointing to the rear of the body. Viewed from a distance, the practitioner appears to be in a roughly ring shape.]"

(viii) The *Amroli Mudra*—The *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 128 describes the Amroli Mudra as follows—"An ascetic who drinks 'Amari' (urine) daily and smells it along with doing the Vajroli Mudra is known as 'Amorli', i.e. the one who is an accomplished ascetic who follows the path of Yoga where urine (of the self or from the cow) acquires a central part of the purification process (128).

[Note—Drinking of urine should not be treated as a vulgar, repulsive and repugnant exercise. It has medicinal value and is often used as a self-created antidote to various poisons present in the body. There is a field of treatment called 'urine therapy' wherein urine is used in potency form like in Homeopathic drugs to cleanse the body of its toxins. It is like self immunization or auto-vaccine.]"

(ix) *Yoni Mudra*—This is in close association with the Khechari Mudra. It has been described in *Yogchudamani Upanishad*, verse no. 59-64 as follows—

"Verse no. 59—[Now, both the sexes—male and female—are addressed in these verses.] Even if due to some reason the 'drops' (the semen) fall into the fierce, raging, flaming, radiant and glorious fire element (representing the passionate attraction posed by the female sexual organs, or the vaginal fluid, it can still be forcibly retained and stopped from being ejaculated, i.e. further ejaculations can be prevented, and the conception in the womb can be averted by adopting the 'Yoni Mudra' (literally, the Yogic posture directed at the control of the process of conception in the womb by implanting semen into it). These 'drops' (of semen) can be directed upwards (i.e. retracted back before their final ejaculation from the male organ into the female organ and resulting in conception) even at the last moment.

"Verse no. 60—The 'fluid' is of two colours—one has a white/silvery colour, and the other has a red/blood colour. The white fluid is called 'Shukla' (i.e. the white sperms floating in the male semen), while the red fluid is called 'Maharaj' (the menstrual fluid present in the female organs).

"Verse no. 61—The 'Raj' (the menstrual fluid) which is red coloured has its place of origin in the radiant and glorious 'Ravi' (literally meaning the sun; here referring to the female ovary). The 'Shukla' (i.e. the sperms) has its abode in the 'Chandra'¹ (literally meaning the moon; here referring to the male testicles). The union, connection, alliance or conjunction of the white male semen (containing the male sperm) and the red coloured female fluid (containing the female ova/egg) is difficult and very rare² (even as it is very difficult and absolutely rare that the moon and the sun can ever come together in the sky).

[Note--¹The word Ravi means the sun, while the word 'Chandra' means the moon. The sun is a repository of a burning and ferocious fire that can burn and scorch anything that comes in its contact. The sun provides the energy that not only sustains and nourishes life in this world but also provides the necessary environs and the breeding ground for it. The sun light helps to carry on the process of photosynthesis, without which there will be no vegetation, and without the latter, no animal kingdom can survive. The moon, on the other hand, is regarded in mythology as the pitcher containing the ambrosia, or the extract of the elixir of life. In this Upanishad, the semen is the white fluid supposedly dripping from the moon which is a receptacle of this divine fluid, while the female organ is regarded as the sun because it not only harbours life but also nourishes and sustains it by providing heat and energy. It provides the basic environs in which life can be made tenable in the crucible of the female womb once the spark of the male sperm is injected into it through the opening of the vagina.

2This fact is sustained by medical science which says, simply put, that hundreds of sperms float or swim in the male semen, heading towards the female egg, but only a lucky few are able to fertilise it.]

“Verse no. 62—The ‘Bindu’ or drop (semen containing the sperm) is akin to Brahma, the primary creator, while the female fluid called ‘Raj’ is akin to ‘Shakti’ or the divine energy responsible for breeding, facilitating, nourishing, sustaining, developing, enhancing and propagating creation.

The ‘drop’ or ‘Bindu’ is like the moon (which is supposed to drip nectar of life), while the ‘Raj’ is akin to the sun (see verse no. 61 above). The supreme stature or state of ultimate bliss and beatitude, joy and felicity, called the ‘Praram Pad’ is achieved only by the union of this ‘Bindu’ (the male semen) and the ‘Raj’ (the female vaginal fluid).

[Note--(i) Simply put, the process of natural contraception is being described in conjunction with the Khechari Mudra. It means that the practitioners of ‘Khechari Mudra’ can have sex with their partner but they have the ability to prevent conception by withholding their sperms by Yogic practices and the accompanying vitality and strength acquired by practicing this Mudra.

(ii) Verse no. 62 describes the sun as being equivalent to the female sexual fluid called ‘Raj’. This is true and only for symbolic purposes. Everyone knows that the sun sustains life on earth —right from the process of photosynthesis in the plants to the control of seasons, the monsoon rains, the weather and the climate, generation of vitamin D for bones, and to provide ‘day light’ without which the earth will freeze to the ice ages. The moon, on the other hand, is likened to the male semen. Obviously there is no wonder that lovers find ‘moonlight’ more charming and alluring than the daylight of the sun. The moon is always associated with love, romance, affection, amorous emotions and cupid, which is usually very active during the night when the moon shines bright. The sun, on the other hand, is synonymous with life, energy, sustenance and power. It is also known that the sun is a boiling cauldron of combustible gases, not solid rock like the earth. So the comparison of it with hot ‘fluid’ is also very apt.

(iii) The use of the word ‘Bindu’ or drop is very significant in the context of life. The word ‘drop’ applies to a liquid or fluid such as water, and not to solids or even to semi-solids, for in the latter cases, we will use the words a blob, a granule, a sphere, a globule, a bulb or a billet or a treacle. Water is an essential ingredient of life. Even solids can be said to be ‘solidified liquids’, as in the case of water solidifying as ice or any molten metal cooling down to its solid form. Only a liquid with a reasonable amount of viscosity such as water and semen can form the rounded shape very specific and peculiar to a ‘drop’ which here refers to semen.]

“Verse no. 63—When the female fluid called ‘Raj’ (as described in verse no. 62) becomes one or coalesces with the male ‘Bindu’ or the semen (or the sperm contained in the semen) moving or swimming towards it under the influence or force of the vital winds (i.e. by being pushed or impelled forward by the forces of the vital life driving winds present in the body), the body of the male becomes glorious, fulfilled, accomplished, heavenly blissful and like a supernatural, brilliant and divine being¹ or the creator Brahma himself (63).

[Note--¹This is the point of time when the male acquires the stupendous authority and potentials to ‘create new life’ even as Brahm injects the mother Nature with the cosmic spark of life, a power considered as the exclusive domain of Brahm. Not even the highest or the most superior of Gods has this authority, power and potential to ‘create’ new life. In this aspect, the sperm is superior to the Gods, and the male who possess this sperm is like the creator Brahma. The male, after fertilising the female egg, experiences the brilliant authority and the majestic powers possessed by Brahma, the creator. For a fleeting moment, there remains no duality or distinction between the male and the supreme creator of the cosmos; they become synonymous with each other, because both of them have the ‘power to create new life’. Both become one. Hence, the use of the adjective ‘heavenly, supernatural and divine’ has been used in the text. The pent-up emotions and desires to ‘create’ are fructified and bear fruit in the form of fertilisation of the female egg by the male sperm. This results in the conception in the female womb, which is the sign of the ‘successful creation of a new life’. This is a rare achievement — to create something from two different entities, the product bearing the characteristic features of both the parents but remarkably different from them in having its own independent outlooks, thought processes, intelligence, behaviours and demeanours. Virtually, it has come into existence from nothing because the sperm and the ova have no physical gross body, are in thick fluid shape and are microscopic in dimension. Taken independently, neither the sperm nor the ova have any resemblance to the body of either the father or the mother respectively. Their union in the womb is also so secret that, for all practical purposes, the infant born appears to have come from nowhere, as if by a divine miracle. This makes the male feel ‘accomplished and fulfilled’. And the final success in achieving something or doing something that only Brahmaa could do makes him feel blissful, accomplished and extremely happy. He feels that he has some divine powers.]

“Verse no. 64—The seeker/aspirant who knows the intricacies of the mystery behind the link or connection between the ‘Raj’ (the female fluid needed for procreation) and the Sun, between the ‘Shukla’ (the male white sperm present in the semen) and the Moon, as well as between the two of them (i.e., the union or fusion of the female ‘Raj’ and the male ‘Shukla’) is indeed known as an expert in the art and science of Yoga. [The symbolic link between the two has been explained in note to verse nos. 62 and 63 above.]”

(x) The *Vaishnavi Mudra*—The *Shandilya Upanishad* of Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, section 7, verse nos. 14 describes the Vaishnavi Mudra, and in verse no. 15 says that it is similar or synonymous to the Khechhari Mudra. Now let us see what it has to say—

“Verse no. 14. The ‘Vaishnavi Mudra’ (posture of one or the other individual organs of the body) is one in which the ascetic’s internal sight (i.e. his thoughts and sub-conscious mind) is focused on his spiritual objective, and his external sight is fixed in such a way

that his eyelids stop flapping (closing and opening). This is the Mudra that is recognized and lauded by all the scriptures dealing with Tantra form of ritualistic worship as the secret of spiritual success and the one that aids the aspirant in obtaining his objectives (14).

“Verse no. 15 = The ascetic whose vital winds and sub-conscious become one while his thoughts are focused internally in contemplation during meditation (i.e. when he adopts the Keval Kumbhak and stops to breathe; when he is not even aware whether or not his body is inhaling or exhaling air so much is he submerged in meditation), and at the same time his motionless and half-open eyes look blankly downwards at an imaginary spot in his front, but do not see anything else—verily, this state is called the ‘Khechari Mudra’.

[In other words, during this Mudra, the internal component of the mind called the sub-conscious, and the external component called the conscious aspect of the mind are both in a state of non-activity and neutrality. The ascetic is so lost in meditation and contemplation that he forgets to even breathe, and though his eyes are half-open he sees nothing because his mind is defunct. It is the mind that registers any sight when it interprets the incoming sensory impulses gathered by the organ of sight known as the eye. The eye merely gathers the impulses that are analyzed and interpreted in the brain as a ‘sight’ of an object. It is the brain or the mind that actually ‘sees’ something, and the eye is merely an instrument to gather information about objects that have a physical form, colour and dimension, and then transfer this information to the brain and let it interpret as sight of that object.]

Since during this Khechari Mudra the ascetic is focused on the ‘self’ which is the auspicious Atma and the pure consciousness, since his inner being and external being have merged into one unit and harmonized with each other, this Mudra is also known as Vaishnavi Mudra. [In other words, both the terms apply to the same Mudra, and in both the cases the aim of doing this Mudra is auspicious and holy.]

When this Mudra is successfully done, the practitioner is able to experience the presence of the supreme and self-illuminated divine entity that is so unique and paradoxical that it cannot be limited by either defining it as being a ‘Shunya’ or as being ‘A-shunya’.

[The divine entity that is implied here is the ‘consciousness’ that resides in the subtle inner self of all living beings as their Atma or their pure ‘self’. The word ‘Shunya’ literally means a void or vacuum or non-existence, implying something that is as subtle and sublime as for instance the air element or the sky element that are surely present but cannot be seen, touched or grasped to ascertain their physical existence. On the other hand, the word ‘A-shunya’ is the opposite of ‘Shunya’—i.e. it is an object that is not subtle, and therefore it is gross. In other words, the entity referred to here is so unique that it possesses paradoxical qualities—it is both subtle as well as gross, and at the same time it is neither subtle nor gross. It is beyond definitions; it transcends fixed boundaries and criterions. Its existence cannot be denied, but at the same time there is no method of physically testing it in material terms to prove its existence. All these criterions apply on the Atma—it is a subtle entity that no one can ever see but without which both the gross body consisting of the external sense organs, as well as the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect complex of the creature would be of no consequence. The vital winds that are called Pran remain active in the body because of this undefined ‘consciousness’. A

dead body too is filled with the wind, but does it show any life? A balloon is filled with air, but can it be called a living being?

Hence, the supreme essence of life that 'illuminates' this dark world by infusing it with 'life' is the divine entity experienced when the ascetic is successful in doing Vaishnavi or Khechhari Mudra.] (15)."

(xi) The *Benefits of Mudras*—The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 5, verse no. 68 says that these Mudras, in association with the different Bandhas, are able to provide freedom from all sins if practiced mildly, and reward the ascetic with complete liberation and deliverance if done for a prolonged period of time and at a higher level of concentration with due diligence. To quote—"The various '*Mudras*¹' (bodily postures) of Yoga that help in practicing the different '*Bandhas*²' (closures of the apertures of the body) are able to divert the vital winds of the body towards the head. Their gradual practice done in a mild manner is potent enough to destroy all the sins of the practitioner. [Since these Mudras and Bandhas are very difficult to practice, it is advisable for a beginner as well as for an ordinary practitioner to practice them in moderation. There are dangerous, and if not handled properly can be fatal and injurious to the ascetic.]

However, if one has developed sufficient expertise and confidence to do them for a prolonged period of time and in a more robust form, it is then certain that these Mudras and Bandhas do have the potentials and the power to provide Moksha (emancipation and salvation) to the practitioner. [Whereas when practiced at a lower level they can provide the benefit of freedom from sins, when they are practiced in their higher level they can reward the ascetic with complete liberation and deliverance altogether. Thus it is to be observed that Yoga presents a comprehensive solution to all the worldly problems of the ascetic.] (68).

[Note--¹The word *Mudra* means 'bodily postures taken during meditative or Yoga sessions'. These are the following—'Yoni' (योनि), 'Beej' (बीज), 'Khechhari' (खेचरी), 'Mahankush' (महानकुश), 'Mahonmadini' (महोनमादिनी), 'Sarwawashankari' (सर्ववशंकरी), 'Sarwakarshini' (सर्वाकर्षिणी), 'Sarwavidravini' (सर्वविद्राविणी), 'Sarwa Sankshovini' (सर्वसंक्षोभिणी).

The Vijay Tantra explains the esoteric meaning of Mudra thus—"the company of the good leads to liberation and evil company to bondages; closure of evil company is termed as Mudra'.

The Mudra is a special body posture and positioning of its various external organs such as the hands, legs, head, etc. along with the various modes in which the mouth, tongue, eyes etc. are held. These Mudras form an integral part of formal forms of ritualistic worship involving Tantras (charm instruments) as well as during Japa (repetition of Mantras). These Mudras are said to harness the latent subtle and divine energy inherently present in the body of the worshipper and harmonize it with the cosmic energy of the deity being worshipped in order to bring about an integration between them and enabling the practitioner to become one with the deity.

The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, 1/3/5; and 2/1/5, 8 describe some of the Mudras and their benefits. They have been also listed in Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda in its verse nos. 26-27. The Yog Kundalini Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda describes the Khechhari Mudra in great detail in its Canto 2 which is dedicated entirely to it.

²According to Yoga Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 41 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition says that there are three main types of Bandhas—Mool Bandha, Uddiyan

Bandha and Jalandhar Bandha. The word *Bandha* literally means ‘the closing of the subtle apertures of the body through which the Pran or the vital winds could escape when pressure is exerted on them while doing Pranayam’. Thereafter, verse nos. 42-52 describe these Bandhas in the context of arousing the latent energy of the Kundalini and helping it rise up in the Sushumna Naadi which ultimately lead the practitioner of Yoga to experience the bliss of consciousness realisation.

Refer also to Canto 5, verse no. 44-45 of this Varaaha Upanishad above which says that the Bandhas are the following—Uddiyan Bandha, Samput Bandha and Mool Bandha.]”

The *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 127 describes the benefits of Yoga as follows—“One who becomes well-versed in practicing this magnificent but esoteric art of doing Yoga as narrated here is deemed to have gained all the mystical, eclectic and divine benefits or rewards called the various Siddhis that automatically accrue to those who do such Yoga. That is, he acquires super natural and super human powers. As a result, he is able to know the events of the past as well as the future, and is certainly able to move through the sky.”

(23) (b) The 10 Mudras—The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 3, paragraph nos. 2-12 describes ten types of Mudras which is collectively calls ‘Yoni Mudras’. Now, let us see what they are—

“2. [Now, the triangular Mudra known as the ‘Yoni Mudra’ is being narrated.]

A person who knows the esoteric and highly secret ‘Yoni Mudra’ acquires such mystical powers that he is able to attract everyone and enthrall them, he becomes all-knowing, he gets all the rewards or fruits that all creatures so much long for, he is able to vanquish all opposition and trounce his enemies. [2].

“paragraph no. 3 = The *first Mudra* (here meaning the way the fingers are held) is made in the following way—The second finger (middle finger) is placed above the third finger (ring finger), the tip of the thumb touches the tip of the fourth finger (the little finger) so as to form a rough ring, and the first finger (index finger) is unfolded and held in a straight line that is pointing ahead and in front at an angle that is roughly 45° below the horizontal. [3].

“paragraph no. 4 = When the two second fingers (middle fingers) of both the hands are joined together while adopting the Mudra described above (as the first Mudra—in paragraph no. 3), then we get the *second Mudra*. [4].

“paragraph no. 5 = The *third Mudra* is in the shape of an Ankush (a goad). [Obviously, this Mudra is made by holding all the fingers close to each other so that their tips touch. This would give a rough shape of a goad.] [5].

“paragraph no. 6 = The *fourth Mudra* is done by rubbing the palms of the two hands against each other while they face in the opposite direction (i.e. if one of the palms has its fingers facing east, the other should have its fingers facing west). While rubbing them, the first finger of each hand should be folded-in tightly, and over it is placed the thumb to

virtually clasp the first finger. The rest of the fingers are held straight out to facilitate the rubbing of the palms. [6].

“paragraph no. 7 = The *fifth Mudra* is done as follows—The thumb is made to touch the nails of the second finger (middle finger), the first finger (index finger) is placed on top of the fourth finger (little finger), and the third finger (ring finger) is kept unfolded (i.e. straight) and held parallel to the second finger but slanting downwards at an angle from the horizontal. [7].

“paragraph no. 8 = The *sixth Mudra* is done by repeating the fifth Mudra but making the tips of all the fingers and the thumb touch each other at a point. This would resemble a Ankush or a goad which has a pointed tip. [8].

“paragraph no. 9 = The *seventh Mudra* is done as follows—The left hand is placed on the right hand. The third finger (ring finger) is bent and placed in the middle of the upper part of the fourth finger (little finger), the second finger (middle finger) is placed on the top of the first finger (index finger), and the thumb is held straight out. This is known as the Khechari Mudra. [9].

“paragraph no. 10 = The *eighth Mudra* is done as follows—The best and most effective Aasan (sitting posture) envisages that the following Mudra is adopted. The fourth finger (little finger) of each hand is bent slightly up and placed between the second and third fingers, the first finger (index finger) is made to bend slightly down and touch the tip of the second and third fingers (so as to make a point like the end of a goad), and the straightened thumbs of both the hands touch each other. The outer flat ends of the two palms also touch each other. This results in the formation of a shape that resembles an oblong cup with a snout that is almost like a conch shell. [10].

“paragraph no. 11 = The *ninth Mudra* is done as follows—The third finger (ring finger) is placed on the top of the second finger (middle finger), the fourth finger (little finger) is pressed by the thumb, and the first finger (index finger) is placed on the top of the pile. [11].

“paragraph no. 12 = The *tenth Mudra* is done as follows—The fourth finger (little finger) is held close to the thumb, almost touching each other and ensuring that their tips are close to each other. Since the remaining fingers numbering three would be free to stand erect, it is known as the ‘Tri-khand Mudra’. [The word ‘Tri’ means ‘three’, and ‘Khand’ means ‘part, division, separation or unit’. During this Mudra, the first finger, the second finger and the third finger are slightly apart from each other instead of touching any one of them as was the case in all the previous Mudras. Hence the term ‘Tri-Khand’ is applied to this Mudra.]

The above discussion describes the various forms of ‘Panch Baan’ and ‘Panchaadi’ Mudras. [12].

(24) The “Chakras”—

These are the wheel-like dynamic energy concentrations in the body, located at different spots.

(A) Location and shape of the Chakras :-

(i) ‘Bhug’ is triangular in shape and represents the female genital organ.

(ii) The ‘Kanda’ (literally meaning the root like structure, a tuber root, e.g. radish) is located 12" above the opening of the anus, has a diameter of 4", is cylindrical in shape, about twelve finger-widths long and covered by a jelly-like soft membrane.

(iii) The ‘Mooladhar Chakra’ represents the earth element, and its Beej (i.e. the root syllable) is the Sanskrit letter Lam (लं). It is located between the genitals and the anus in the area called the pelvic plexus or the perineum. It is the site of the symbolic Shiva Lingam (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 168) and the route through which the Apaana wind finds its entrance in the Kundalini (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 13). It is also here that the ascetic hears the Naad. It is said to be a symbol of Shakti or the dynamic powers of Shiva principle (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 8, 11-12 and Canto 3, verse no. 2).

(iv) The ‘Swadhisthan Chakra’ is located above the groins of males and the Bhug area of females. It has a symbolic 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed, and its counterpart in the female is the clitoris—it is called Hypogastric plexus. It forms the base of the genitals. It represents the water element, and its Beej (i.e. the root syllable) is the Sanskrit letter Vam (वं).

The Chakras 1-4 are related to the sexual reproduction cycle marking the creation of the world. Hence are called ‘Kaam’ (lust, passion, desire), and are associated with the fire element.

(v) The ‘Kundalini’ is located at the base of the spine between the navel and Swadhisthan Chakra in the upper part of the Moolkand, and it is coil shaped having three and a half loops. Its one end blocks the entrance to the Sushumna nerve (Naadi) rising from the base of the spine and going right up to the head. Therefore, we conclude that Kundalini lies dormant at the base of the spine.

(vi) The ‘Manipur Chakra’ is located in the navel area, is shaped like a gem and is surrounded by the network of Naadis (nerves) called the solar plexus. It is also the site of the symbolic solar energy in the body as it is located in a region where the Sun is said to present in a symbolic manner in the body, i.e.

in the region between the navel and heart. It represents the fire element, and its Beej (i.e. the root syllable) is Raṃ (ॠ + an Anuswar, which is a 'dot' placed on the top of an alphabet; pronounced as in Rum / Run(g)).

(vii) The 'Anahat Chakra' is located in the chest around the heart area and it is shaped like a swan looking downwards. It is also assumed to be like a 8-petal lotus facing down. It is also called the Hridaya Chakra or the cardiac plexus. It represents the air/wind element, and its Beej (i.e. the root syllable) is the Sanskrit letter Yaṃ (ॡ + an Anuswar, which is a 'dot' placed on the top of an alphabet; pronounced as Yum / Youn(g)).

(viii) The 'Vishuddha Chakra/Kanth Chakra' is located in the pit of the throat. To the left of it passes the Eda nerve representing the moon, to its right goes the Pingla nerve representing the sun, and in the center is the Sushumna nerve through which the Kundalini energy rises up from the base of the spine to the skull. It is called pharyngeal plexus. It represents the sky (ether) element, and its Beej (i.e. the root syllable) is the Sanskrit letter Haṃ (ॢ + an Anuswar, which is a 'dot' placed on the top of an alphabet; pronounced as Hun(g))

(ix) The 'Talu Chakra' also called Raajdant as well as Ghantikaa. It is the route which leads to the so-called the 10th door of Brahm which is the Brahm Randhra at the top of the head. It is located in the palate at the back of the mouth near the base of the tongue. It is located at the rear end of the palate at the back of the mouth cavity and near the base of the tongue. This site is where the cavity of the mouth opens into the wind pipe linking the lungs and the nostrils.

(x) The 'Agya Charka or Bhru Chakra' is located between the eyebrows and root of the nose. It is also called the third eye of enlightenment and wisdom. It represents the Mahat (that which transcends the elements) and its Beej (i.e. its root syllable) is the Sanskrit monosyllabic word OM.

(xi) The 'Brahm Randhra Chakra or Sahasraar Charka' is located in the head below the cranium and has the form of a 1000-petal lotus. It has the form of a grey cloud or smoke. It is near the hair-like spilt in the top of the skull from where the vital wind called 'Pran' makes its exit from the body of a Yogi (ascetic) at the time of his death.

(xii) The 'Vyom Chakra' is symbolic of the sky and it is shaped like a 10-petal lotus located at the top of the head below the skull.

(B) Influence of Chakras on the personality of a man—The seven main Chakras determine the general temperament, outlook, nature, demeanors and

overall personality of a man. The chief traits or positive virtues that are influenced by these seven Chakras are listed below:-

- (i) Muladhar Chakra relates to the virtue of innocence.
- (ii) Swadhisthan Chakra relates to creativity.
- (iii) Nabhi Chakra has an influence on peace.
- (iv) Heart Chakra controls such emotions as love and compassion.
- (v) Kantha Chakra helps generate collectivity because it is through the throat that a man can call out to someone and collect and address a crowd.
- (vi) Bhru Chakra is the center of wisdom, and hence controls forgiveness, fortitude and tolerance.
- (vii) Brahm Randhra Chakra deals with intellect and mind since it is located at the top of the head. Hence, it controls integration and coordination.

(C) The colours of the Chakras—

- (i) The Mooladhar Chakra has the Red colour.
- (ii) The 'Swadhisthan Chakra' has the Orange colour.
- (iii) The 'Manipur Chakra' has the Yellow colour. (A combination of Red and Green)
- (iv) The 'Anahat Chakra' has the Green colour.
- (v) The 'Vishuddha Chakra or Kantha Chakra' and the 'Taluka Chakra' both have the Blue colour with the hue of smoke-grey (dull or light shade of blue).
- (vi) The 'Bhru Chakra or Agya Chakra' has the Indigo colour which adds a bluish tinge to the cloudy suble space of the head.
- (vii) The 'Brahm Randhra Chakra' has light Blue colour.
- (viii) The 'Sasaraar or Vyom Chakra' has the Violet colour and has the form of a grey cloud or smoke.

The Chakras, as the name suggests, are the subtle 'whirling wheels of stupendous divine energy' in the body. The Chakras are located along the spinal cord from its base to the top of the head. These Chakras manage the body's energy system. They receive, assimilate and distribute the energy throughout the body and the spinal nerve system.

Malfunctioning Chakras have a negative impact on the body; they restrict or block the movement of vital energies and winds inside the body. The different ways to keep these Chakras in fine-tuned condition are—meditation, Yoga exercises, various postures, chanting of Mantras etc. The properly functioning Chakras keep the endocrine glands functioning properly so that the hormones can regulate the proper functioning of the body. The immune system of the body is activated, diseases are naturally fought and detoxification process speeded up in the body.

(25) The “Naadis”—

These are the various ducts through which vital airs and energy flows inside the body.

(a) The concept of Naadi has been dealt with in all the major Upanishads dealing with Yoga—(a) Sam Veda's Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 5-22 ½, 35-42, 46-47, and Yogchudamani, verse nos. 15-21. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda's Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 67-76. (c) Krishna Yajur Veda's Kshuriko, verse nos. 8-20; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 23-31, 37; Yog Tattva; Dhyān Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 50-60; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 17-27; Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 10-18. (d) Atharva Veda's Prashna Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 6; Mundak Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 2, section 2, verse no. 6; Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 4, verse nos. 1, 9-11; Bhavana Upanishad, verse no. 2, stanza no. 20.

The word Naadi literally refers to a tubular duct present inside the body through which all the vital forces of life travel from one point to another and keep the body alive, active and healthy. It is through the Naadi that the vital winds known as Pran flow; it is through them that blood flows; it is through them that senses travel from the sense organs of the body to the brain and from the brain to all the corners of the body; it is through the Naadis that various juices and fluids of the body are secreted and made to reach their targeted areas. Even if one Naadi is damaged, the body suffers.

It is through the Naadis that are present in the body that Pran or life-consciousness represented by the various vital winds, sensory impulses and perceptions, and all other vital signs of life inside the body move. Yoga Upanishads say that there are seventy two thousand Naadis radiating out from the Nabhi Kanda (refer Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 6).

Atharva Veda's Prashna Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 6 describes the existence of one hundred chief Naadis around the heart, and each is divided into a hundred branches. Each of these branches gives out seventy two thousand more branches. Therefore the total number of Naadis springing out from the heart = 100 main Naadis x 100 sub-Naadis x 72000 more branches of each of these sub-Naadis = 72 0000000 total number of Naadis that branch out from the heart and go to each corner of the body.

The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 5, verse nos. 22-30 describe fifteen Naadis. They are Sushumna, Alambusa, Kuhu (verse no. 23), Varuna, Yashawani, Pingla (verse no. 24), Payaswini, Saraswati (verse no. 25), Shankhini, Gandahari, Ida (verse no. 26), Hasit-jivaha, Vishwadora (27), Naad-dhara, Jwalanti (verse no. 29) and Para-randhra (verse no. 30).

According to Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Sam Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 6-8, out of these only fourteen Naadis are said to be the important ones—Sushumna, Pingla, Ida, Saraswati, Varuna, Pusha, Yashaswani, Hasit-jivaha, Alambusa, Kuhu, Vishwadora, Payaswini, Shankhini and Gandahari. Verse nos. 13-22 ½ of Canto 4 of the Jabal Darshan Upanishad describes the location and distribution of these Naadis in detail.

The Bhavana Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 2, stanza no. 20 lists fourteen main Naadis and says that they represent fourteen forms of the divine

Goddesses known as the Shakti. To quote—”The following fourteen Naadis (tubular ducts in the body; the nerves and veins) are like the fourteen Goddess such as Sarwa-shankshobhini etc.—Alumbusa, Kuhu, Vishwodar, Varuna, Hastijivha, Yashaswani, Ashwini, Gaandhaari, Pusha, Shankhini, Saraswati, Ida, Pingla, and Sushumna Naadis (2/20).”

But according to Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda, verse no. 15-17, and Dhyani Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 52-53, there are only ten Naadis that are more important. They are—Ida, Pingla, Sushumna, Gandhari, Hasti-Jivaha, Pusha, Yashaswini, Alambusa, Kuhu and Shankhini. Their location has been described in Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Sam Veda, Canto 4, verse nos. 13-17.

Again, even out of these, only three are of the greatest importance, and they are—Sushumna, Ida and Pingla.

The Sushumna is regarded as the best and the most important one even amongst these three. It goes through the central core of the spinal cord from its base in the Kundalini right upto the Brahm Randhra at the top of the head. [Refer—Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 9-10]

The Ida goes to the left of it to the left nostril; and the Pingla goes to the right of it to the right nostril. [Refer—Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 13.]

The Sushumna Naadi is called the Brahm Naadi Ida Naadi is said to be the Chandra Naadi, and Pingla is said to be the Surya Naadi.

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YOGA

It's Practice & Philosophy

According to the Upanishads

SECTION 1

UPANISHADS OF THE RIG VEDA

Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad

This Upanishad has 3 Cantos. The 1st Canto describes the various Mantras, Chakras, ways of worship and doing mediation on the geometrical device called a 'Tantrik Yantra' as an instrument for the worship of Goddess Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth, prosperity and well-being. Like the Mudgalopanishad which highlights the importance of 'Purush Sukt', this Upanishad brings to the fore the importance, significance and glory of the 'Sri Sukt' dedicated to the divine Mother Goddess.

The 2nd Canto deals with the various Yoga practices which culminate in 'Samadhi'.

The 3rd Canto describes the various 'Chakras' (subtle energy centers in the body) and their significance.

Hence we see that the name 'Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad' is a misnomer because barring the first Canto, the other two Cantos deal primarily with Yoga and have nothing to do with the worship of Laxmi.

Shantipaath

[The "Shanti Paath" is the hymn that is recited at the beginning and the end of any scriptural recitation or reading. It essentially invokes the concerned deity to bestow peace ("Shanti") upon the reader of the particular scriptural text.]

OM salutations! Oh supreme Lord! Let my speech and my mind be one and in harmony with each other (i.e., let my speech say what I think; let me not be deceitful, cunning, imposturous and treacherous; let me not speak and think differently). Oh Lord! Present yourself before me (i.e., remove all the delusions and the darkness of ignorance which have engulfed me from all the

sides so that I can see through the darkness as well as the deluding mist, and view your splendorous form, experience the bliss of your presence). Empower me so that I can acquire the knowledge and wisdom enunciated by the Vedas while not forgetting that which has been already acquired. Let my self-study about the true nature and the essences of the absolute reality that the Brahman is continue uninterrupted, unhindered day and night. I should speak what is good and noble (i.e., I should never indulge in false gossip, cursing, swearing, utter expletives, tattle, criticise others etc.) as well as the truth (i.e., I should never indulge in deceitful talk and falsehood). Let the supreme Brahman protect me. Let the supreme Brahman protect my teacher. Let all the 3 types of torments that afflict me be calmed down. [The so-called 3 Traitaps are the torments that the creature is subjected to due to his body such as illness, old age; due to other worldly creatures such as fear from the king, thieves etc.; due to the malignant stars and opposed Gods.] Let us have peace.

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Canto 1

1. Once upon a time, all the Gods went to Lord Narayan (Vishnu) and prayed, 'Oh Lord! Please be kind to preach us about the sublime knowledge of 'Saubhagya Laxmi Vidya' (1).

2. Lord Narayan said, 'Oh Gods! All right, all of you listen attentively. She (Goddess Laxmi) is beyond the three states of existence such as the gross, the subtle and the casual states of existence. She is an embodiment of the 4th state of utter bliss called 'Turiya state', and at the same time she is beyond that state as well. She is difficult to attain and is seated above all the Mantras which together form her seat (i.e., she has supremacy over all the Mantras symbolising the various Gods; she rules over all the Mantras and their patron Gods; all the Mantras are under her control and command). She is surrounded (i.e., served) by the various Gods and demi-Gods of various abodes or 'Peeths' (literally, seats) and she has four arms. The 15 verses of the 'Sri Sukt' should be used to worship her, mediate upon her and adore her. (2).

3. Indira, Anand, Chiklit and Kardam are the four sages/seers who are considered expert and proficient in the tenets of the 'Sri Sukt'. [These 4 sages are specialised in this field.]

Indira is the sage who is expert in the 1st verse of the 'Sri Sukt' while the remaining three sages are experts in the other 14 verses of the 'Sri Sukt'. This Indira is also called 'Sri' or 'Laxmi', and the other three sages (Anand, Chiklit and Kardam) are symbolically deemed to be her sons.

The 1st three verses of the 'Sri Sukt' are called 'Anushtup-chand', the 4th verse is 'Brihati-chand', the 5th and the 6th verses are 'Trishtup-chand', the 7th verse till the 14th are once again called 'Anustup-chand' and the remaining ones (15th and 16th) are called 'Prastar-pankti-chand'.

[A “Chanda” is a style of composition in which the hymns of the Vedas were written.]

‘Fire’ and ‘Sri’ are the patron Gods of these Mantras. ‘Hiranyavarnam’ is the seed/root word and ‘Kansosmi’ is the vital energy called ‘Shakti’ of all the Mantras of the ‘Sri Sukt’.

Next, the process of ‘Anganyas’ should be done. The various names of the Goddess—such as (i) ‘Hiranyamaye’, (ii) ‘Chandra’, (iii) ‘Rajat-straja’, (iv) ‘Hiranyastraja’, (v) ‘Hiranya’ and (vi) ‘Hiranyavarna’—should be pronounced with the divine word ‘OM’ as a prefix and ‘Namaha’ as a suffix for each of these names of the Goddess. For example ‘OM HIRANYAMAYE NAMAHA’ etc. The various parts of the body—such as the head, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, throat, arms, heart, navel, genitals, anus, thighs, calves etc.—should be touched while pronouncing the above Mantras. This process is called ‘Anganyas’ which means to purify the various parts of the body and sanctify them by invoking specific patron Gods pertaining to those parts. In this Upanishad dealing with Goddess Laxmi, this purification is symbolically done by her name (3).

4. The aspirant should then visualise the divine Goddess Laxmi as follows—‘She is seated on a brilliant light red coloured lotus flower, and is light yellow in complexion like the nectar of the lotus plant. Two of her hands are raised in the posture of bestowing fearlessness and boons to her devotees, while the other two hands hold a lotus each. She wears bracelets studded with gems; she looks magnificent and glorious in all her finery, is adorned with all conceivable ornaments, and is the Mother of all the worlds’. Bless us constantly with prosperity and good fortunes (4).

5. Now, the construction of the Sri Yantra—the charm instrument used for the worship of Goddess Laxmi—is described in this verse:-

In the core (centre) of the Yantra, the root/seed word ‘Sring’ and the work to be done or accomplished by the aspirant/seeker should be written. Then three layers of lotus petals should be drawn around the central core in circles, one after another—the 1st ring has 8-petals, the 2nd ring has 12-petals and the 3rd ring has 16-petals. Each ring or layer is enclosed by a circular ring; hence there are three concentric circles, each separating one layer of the lotus ring from the other.

The next step is: write half line of each verse/hymn of the ‘Sri Sukt’ above each of the lotus petals but inside their enclosing circle. [That is, half line of each hymn of the ‘Sri Sukt’ should be written in sequence, first above each of the 8-petals of the 1st layer, then each of the 12-petals of the 2nd layer, and finally above each of the 16-petals of the 3rd layer.] The result would be the entire ‘Sri Sukt’ will be included.

Outside the circle surrounding the lotus with 16-petals, the words of the 16th hymns of ‘Sri Sukt’ (called ‘Falsruti’, or the benefits of chanting the main hymn) should be written. The letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, from ‘A’ to ‘Ksha’, should be written in the various layers of the lotus petals

mentioned above. The resultant 'Sri Chakra' will have ten segments/sections, and it should be used to invoke the Goddess called 'Sri' or 'Laxmi' (See verse no. 9 in this context).

[The 10 segments are as follows— the central core having the word OM, then around it is the hexagon, this is followed by a circle, 8-petal lotus, a circle, 12-petal lotus, a circle, 16-petal lotus, a circle, and finally the outer periphery = 10] (5).

6. The first 'Awaran' or enclosure/covering/sheath/veil/circle of the 'Yantra' is worshipped by using the 'Mantras' of 'Anganyas' (see verse no. 3). The second 'Awaran' is worshipped by using the holy lotus flowers etc. The third 'Awaran' is worshipped by the invocation of Indra and other 'Lokpals' who are Gods responsible for the custody of the world. The fourth 'Awaran' is worshipped by invoking their (Lokpal's) weapons. The ritual of welcoming and invoking the various Gods etc. are done by using the 'Mantras' of the 'Sri Sukt'. After that, 'Japa' (repetition of the holy Mantra) should be done 16 thousand times using the 'Mantras' (6).

[Note :- Up to this verse the worship of 'Mantra has been described in brief.]

7. Now, the actual worship of the divine Goddess Laxmi is being described here—the sage who had first visualised, conceptualised, proclaimed and enunciated the 'Mantra' pertaining to Goddess Laxmi was 'Bhrigu'. Gayatri is the hymn, the patron deity for worship is 'Sri' (i.e., Goddess Laxmi), the root/seed word or syllable is 'Shung', and the process of purifying the body, called 'Anganyas' (see verse no. 3) is done by chanting of the seed word 'Sraang' (7).

8. The seeker/aspirant should adore and pray to Goddess Laxmi as follows— 'The Goddess is holding a lotus in each of her two hands and holds the other two in a posture which gives boons and fearlessness to her devotees. Her complexion is radiant and glowing like hot gold. She is being formally consecrated with water poured on her head from two pitchers held in the trunks of two tuskens (elephants) which are as magnificent as banks of rain-bearing clouds. She wears a crown studded with red-coloured gems and is attired in beautiful clothes. Her eyes are like lotus flowers and her body is smeared by a fragrant paste of sandalwood etc. which is compatible to the prevalent season. She resides in the heart of Lord Vishnu who is reclining on the legendary 'Kshir Sagar' (the celestial ocean of milk). Let that Goddess Laxmi seat herself on a divine lotus and graciously bless me with the best of majesty, glory, prosperity, wealth, fame and powers (8).

9. The sage now describes how the 'Pooja Yantra' or worship instrument of the Goddess is actually used to invoke and worship her—the 'Peeth' (Yantra) has 3 concentric circles, 8, 12 and 16-petal lotuses and having an outer

periphery shaped like a square. It is the shape of the 'Ramaa Peeth' (रामा पीठ). In its core (center) is the root/seed word 'Sring' (श्री) for Laxmi. After having completed daily oblations (purifying rituals such as bathing, washing of mouth etc.), worship of the 'Peeth' and worship of the patron sage, the various names of the Goddess should be pronounced by using OM as a prefix and NAMAHA as a suffix with each name. The various names of the Goddess symbolise the various milestones of successes or achievements or accomplishments that a worshipper expects to reach or accomplish by worshipping the Goddess. These names are— (i) 'Vibuthi', (ii) 'Kanti', (iii) 'Unnati', (iv) 'Kirti', (v) 'Srishti', (vi) 'Sannati', (vii) 'Viyushti', (viii) 'Riddhi', and (ix) 'Satkrishti'. (See also verse no. 5 in this context) (9).

[Note :- The various names of the Goddess mentioned above are metaphors for various qualities and achievements such as for example: (i) excellence, dignity, glory, majesty and riches—'Vibhuti'; (ii) radiance and splendour —Kanti; (iii) growth and development—Unnati; (iv) glory, fame and renown—Kirti; (v) creative powers—Srishti; (vi) family and progeny—Sannati; (vii) knowledge, skill and expertise—Viyushti; (viii) prosperity, success, accomplishment and achievements—Riddhi; and (ix) good name, virtuous deeds and righteousness—Satkrishti etc.]

10. The seeker/aspirant should do 'Anganyas' (see verse no. 3) and then worship the Goddess, as described above, in the 1st 'Awaran' (see verse no. 6). The various forms of Vishnu such as Vamdeo (and Sankarshan, Pradumna and Anirudha) should be worshipped in the 2nd 'Awaran'. The Goddess called 'Balaki' etc. (namely i.e., Balaki, Vimala, Kamla, Vibhishika, Vanmalika, Malika and Vasumalika) should be worshipped in the 3rd 'Awaran'. Indra and other Gods as well as their weapons should be worshipped in the 4th 'Awaran'. 'Mantras' should be repeated 12 lakh (1 lakh = 100 thousand) times diligently for success in the endeavour (10).

11. The worship of the divine Goddess Laxmi using a single seed/root word as being equivalent to worshipping her with the triad of seed/root words is described here—The worship using the triad 'Sring', 'Hrim' and 'Sring' is the same as when it is done by using only one seed word 'Sring' as described earlier in verse no. 9-10.

The only difference is in the worship of the 3rd 'Awaran'. For it, the divine word OM is to be used as a prefix and the word NAMAHA as a suffix to the following names of the Goddess and worship her with those names—'Sri', 'Laxmi', 'Vardaa', 'Vishnu Patni', 'Vasupradaa', 'Hiranyarupaa', 'Swarna Malini', 'Rajat-strajaa', 'Swarana-prabha', 'Swarn-prakaraa', 'Padma-vasini', 'Padama-priyaa', 'Padma-hastaa', 'Chandra-suryaa', 'Muktalankaaraa', 'Vilva-priyaa', 'Ishwari', 'Bhukti', 'Mukti', 'Vibhuti', 'Riddhi', 'Samriddhi', 'Krishti', 'Pushti', 'Dhanadaa', 'Dhneshwari', 'Shradhaa', 'Bhogini', 'Bhogadaa', 'Savitri', 'Dhatri', and 'Vidhaatri' etc.

The 'Anganyas' process (i.e., cleaning and purification) is the same as done with a single seed/root word. For success, 1 lakh (100 thousand)

‘Mantras’ should be repeated. Out of these ‘Mantras’, 1/10th should be offered as libation to the dead ancestors (a process called ‘Tarpan’), 1/10th should be offered as oblation to the fire sacrifice, and 1/10th should be offered to Brahmins as donation to them for their satisfaction and contentment (11).

[Note:- The meaning of the names of the Goddess are the following—(1) Sri — prosperity, majesty, glory and fame. (2) Laxmi—wealth, financial well-being. (3) Varda—one who bestows boons and blessings. (4) Vishnu Patni—divine consort of Lord Vishnu, the sustainer. (5) Vasuprada —one who gives gems, jewels, assets, wealth, glory and majesty. (6) Hiranyarupa—golden formed and complexioned. (7) Swarna malini—wearing a golden necklace. (8) Rajat Straya—glittering with silvery sparkle. (9) Swarna Prabha—one of golden radiance and halo. (10) Swarna Prakara—having a golden form. (11) Padma Vasini —one who resides in/seats on a lotus flower. (12) Padma Priya —one who loves the lotus flower. (13) Padma Hasta—one who holds a lotus flower in her hands. (14) Chandra Surya —radiant and splendorous like the moon and the sun. (15) Muktalankar —decorated with pearls. (16) Vilwa Priya —one who loves the divine vilva tress (wood apple tree). (17) Ishwari —Goddess. (18) Bhukti—one who experiences and witnesses. (19) Mukti—one who personifies emancipation and liberation. (20) Vibhuti —one who represents excellence, dignity, majesty, glory as well as riches, prosperity, wealth etc. (21) Riddhi —one who represents material well-being. (22) Samridhi —one who represents well-being, empowerment, accomplishment, full of glory and majesty. (23) Krishti—one who represent abundance of grains symbolising good harvest. (24) Pushti—one who is well nourished, well fed, healthy and robust; it also means support, ratification of the deeds and actions. (25) Dhanadaa —one who gives wealth and money liberally. (26) Dhaneshwari —the patron Goddess of wealth and treasures. (27) Shradha—one who symbolises respect, reverence, honour, and is worthy of it. (28) Bhogini—one who enjoy. (29) Bhogada—one who bestows the favours of enjoyments. (30) Savitri—one who represents the splendour and glory of the sun; the rays of the sun. (31) Dhatri—a mother. (32) Vidhatri—Mother Goddess.]

12. Only those who have no desires are able to master this skill and art pertaining to ‘Sri Laxmi Vidya’. Those who have desires can never get success. [The emphasis is on selfless worship of the Goddess, not asking her anything for personal and vested interests. But, once the Goddess is pleased, she will shower her blessings and favours on the devotee without his asking for it. This is the significance of this verse—one should not be greedy and be rapacious for wealth, treasures, properties, assets and other material comforts of the world. These should be honoured for their virtues to provide sustenance and the basic necessities of life so as to make it reasonably comfortable. But hankering and yearning for them, hoarding them, lusting for them and committing all types of sins and misdeeds for them, is absolutely not acceptable for a true worshiper of Goddess Laxmi (12).

[Note:- The Great Mother is humanity’s most primordial, all-pervasive, all powerful and fruitful image of reality. Either covertly or overtly, she appears with extraordinary and stupendous power, prowess, wisdom and tenderness at the core of every noble culture. She illuminates the entire

cosmos because she is not some local or limited goddess but our universal, cosmic Mother. She expresses herself fluently through and within every sacred tradition, without needing to call attention to her feminine nature.]

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Canto 2

Various concepts and practices of Yoga (meditation) are described in this Canto in brief.

1. All the Gods once again asked the 'Adi Narayan' (i.e., the Lord who was present in the beginning of creation; Lord Vishnu), 'Oh Lord! Please tell us about that elementary, universal, immutable and essential truth that is experienced in the fourth state of consciousness which is called 'Turiya'.

Saying alright, 'Adi Narayan' began his discourse, 'Attempt should be made to understand Yoga by means of Yoga itself. Yoga is enhanced by Yoga. The Yogi (ascetic) who diligently remains ever committed, vigilant and alert in his yogic practices, remaining free from carelessness, lethargy, indolence, errors and misdemeanours as well as worldly distractions of all kinds, is able to enjoy eternal bliss and beatitude.

The Yogic seeker should use only the bare necessities of life (just enough to sustain it); he should abandon all the worldly faults and blemishes such as attachments, hatreds, ill-will, malice, delusions, hallucinations and worldly illusions of all kinds (1).

2. He should guard against over-sleeping, inertia and lethargy which create hurdles in the attainment of Brahma. Instead, he should stay in a lonely, secluded, remote and serene place (away from the hustle and bustle of this mundane world which are vexations for the spirit) and involve himself diligently in meditation and other spiritual pursuits. He should continuously practice to identify the Atma (self, soul and spirit) with the supreme Brahman (the supreme Soul, the universal Spirit, and the vast, cosmic Self). He should follow the path of 'Raj-yog' with a firm resolve so as to overcome the obstacles created by heat and/or cold and other such physical distractions of the world.

[That is, he should not allow his body to suffer so much discomfort that it revolts in spite of the aspirant's sincerity to proceed ahead in his Yoga and other spiritual practices, and as a consequence, he has to abandon doing Yoga and pursue his spiritualism all together. 'Raj Yoga' simply means providing the basic necessities of life to the body but keeping away from gross indulgence and overdoing anything. Instead, the focus here should be on meditation and contemplation on the Atma and Brahman in spite of carrying on the worldly activities as usual, but doing them with dispassion and detachment] (2).

3. During the process of 'Pranayam' (a yogic exercise wherein breath is controlled), Yogis (ascetics) should pull in the air from their nostrils and fill their lungs with it. Then they should force the 'Apan wind' (i.e., the flatulence in the lower intestines) in the region of the navel (abdomen) into the stomach. After that, the above two winds (Pran and Apan) are mixed.

Next, they should use their thumb, fingers and palms to close the openings of the ears, eyes and nose. By the constant practice of this method of doing 'Pranayam' as well as by concentrating on OM (i.e., the word representing the cosmic sound called 'Naad' or 'Pranav' representing Brahma) they become lost in it, or are so deeply engrossed and submerged in it that they lose awareness of the external world. This results in their experiencing the super consciousness inside their bosom. This super consciousness is indeed their pure-self (3).

[Note:- The word Yoga generally speaking refers to meditation and its attendant exercise. It helps to concentrate and contemplate, to control the mind and the vital winds, to harness the subtle energy lying dormant in the body, to activate the 'Chakras', and is one of the various paths to spiritual upliftment of the individual. More than any other benefit, its most apparent and immediate effect is good health for the body.]

4. There is another way to practice this Yoga by closing the openings of the ears, mouth, eyes and nose. In this method, the pure vibration created by the 'Naad' (i.e. the cosmic sound present in the cosmic space) are clearly heard (perceived) in the 'Sushumna' nerve (as it begins to vibrate with the same frequency as the Naad). [This phenomenon is like the vibrations of the 'tuning fork' when if one of its limbs is hit with a rod, the entire tuning form begins to vibrate in symphony.] (4).

5. When this sound of 'Naad' is heard, various dimensions and magnitudes of sound of varying amplitudes, frequencies, notes, tones and tenors are discernible in the 'Anahat Chakra'. By this practice, the seeker/aspirant becomes possessed of extreme radiance of divine glory; a divine fragrance/scent emanates from his body, he acquires pristine health and attains a divine and holy body (5).

6. His heart's desires are all fulfilled. In the very beginning itself, when the practitioner hears (i.e., experiences the vibrations emanating from) the cosmic sound of the 'Naad' in his 'Sushumna' nerve, he becomes 'non-existent' as far as the external world is concerned. The place of the origin of the 'Sushumna' nerve is a subtle energy circle called 'Mool (or Brahm) Granthi Muladhar Chakra'.

After that, in the second stage of meditation, the vital wind called 'Pran' (literally, the wind of life; breath) pierces and passes through the center of energy center called 'Vishnu Granthi-Swadhasthan Chakra' to enter the 'Sushumna' nerve (6).

[Note:- (i) The 'Muladhar Chakra' is also called 'Agni Kund' located between the genitals and anus. (ii) The 'Swadisthan Chakra' is also called 'Udriyan Peeth' and it is located in the groin. (iii) The 'Sushuman' nerve is the central nerve running up from the base of the spin to the head. According to Yoga, the energy encapsulated or trapped in the 'Kundalini'—which is present in the form of a coil at the base of the spine—rises to the brain through this nerve.]

7. The Yogi feels steady and confident in his pursuit while sitting in a posture called 'Padmasan'. Having pierced the 'Vishnu Granthi' (see verse no. 6 above) which is synonymous with 'Maya' (delusions, worldly allurements, ignorance), the Yogi is able to achieve bliss, happiness and contentedness (because Maya is the root cause of all the ills and sorrows associated with this world) (7).

[Note:- The sitting posture called 'Padmasan' is the most convenient and easy sitting posture for a Yogi to sit for meditation. Basically, it is sitting cross-legged on the ground with the body, neck and the head held straight in a line. The open palms of both the hands are placed one on the top of the other, facing upwards, such that they lie gently on the lap in the center after the legs have been crossed.]

8. When the 'Pran Vayu' (the vital wind force of life) comes in contact with the 'Sushumna' nerve, it produces a sound resembling that of the kettle-drum. It proceeds ahead and rises up. When it pierces/passes through the 3rd energy centre called 'Rudra Granthi-Manipur Chakra' while on its way up, it produces a sound resembling that of a drum or tumbrel (8).

9. After that, the 'Pran Vayu' (the vital wind of life; breath) progressively rises up to reach the 'great void or space', or the sky element called 'Akash-Chakra' present in the top of the head. Once there, all achievements are easily accessible to it (i.e., to the Yogi by the medium of the 'Pran Vayu'. That is, once the 'Pran Vayu' has entered the space called 'Akash-Chakra' located in the head, the Yogi acquires such stupendous powers as those of the wind and nothing remains inaccessible for him).

The 'Pran Vayu' eventually pierces through this also and merges/coalesces itself (i.e., it dissolves) in all the energy circles giving the sense of immense joy and bliss to the aspirant/seeker (9).

10. At the culmination of this Yogic practice, the cosmic sound called 'Pranav' or 'Naad' manifests itself (i.e., is heard) very clearly. The mind and heart becomes engrossed in this eternal sound of 'Pranav' represented by the divine word OM—this is what great sages like Sankadi have said (10).

11. Once established in the vast void-like space, the seeker/aspirant is able to experience the oneness of his 'Atma' (soul) with the supreme Soul of the

cosmos. He literally coalesces/merges his 'Atma', which is veiled or covered by 'Maya' and which is but a fraction of the vast, eternal, infinite entity called the supreme, transcendental Brahma, with the latter. This awareness of the infinite, vast, eternal, all-pervading, omnipresent and omnipotent nature of his own 'Atma' by merging its miniscule identity with the vast, fathomless, infinite macrocosmic identity of Brahmmakes the aspirant fully contented and fulfilled, completely blissful and overwhelmed with eternal beatitude (11).

12. The Yogi should overcome any possible hurdles or hindrances that might come in his way in attaining higher stature in Yoga practices by employing other techniques (i.e., he should overcome any confusion by delving deeper into the scriptures to find a solution to his confusions and doubts, and remove them by other methods if the method he has been employing does not suffice).

He should overcome the sense of duality between his individual self (Atma) and the supreme Self (Brahma) which prevents his becoming one with the macrocosm by the constant and diligent practice of the principle of 'non-duality' (i.e., by thinking that his identity is the same as that of the supreme identity or Brahma; they are one and the same).

Again, he should overcome doubts and confusions with firm faith and conviction. Gradually, the aspirant/seeker enters the state of existence called 'Nirvikalp Samadhi' which leads him to access the only and absolute truth, the universal reality, the Supreme Essence of everything [(i) The word 'Nirvikalp' means 'without an alternative; one of its kind'. (ii) The word 'Samadhi' refers to the trance-like state of existence when the Yogi loses awareness of the external world.] (12).

13. In such a state, egotism abandons the aspirant/seeker. Even the world of delusions, having its origin in ignorance and illusions, also vanishes for an aspirant/seeker who is firmly established in his pure 'Atma', which is pure consciousness. Hence, enlightened ones go beyond the concept of 'I am this and I am that', and 'this is mine and that is mine' etc. (13).

14. Even as salt and water become inseparable and indistinguishable from one another when the former is dissolved in the latter, the dissolution or merger of the mind-intellect complex in the Atma is called state of trance or 'Samadhi' (14).

15. During the process of 'Pranayam' (see verse no. 2) when the 'Pran Vayu' (breath) becomes weekend (i.e., is shorn of its agility, restlessness and the nature to be constantly on the move) and is localised in the chest (i.e., it is not exhaled), and the tendencies of the mind (to remain in a state of restlessness and flux) also dries up or 'Shrinks and shrivels up' (i.e., the mind becomes calm, stable and subdued), the intellect links itself resiliently with the pure-self or Atma with a strand or cord which is like an unbroken,

tenacious flow of oil between any two points. This state is called ‘Samadhi’ (15).

16. When the Atma of the creature becomes one with the supreme ‘Atma’ of the cosmos, all consternations, doubts and confusions are dispelled. Such a state is called ‘Samadhi’ (16).

17. When the mind-intellect complex becomes totally unaware of the external world and its stimuli in the form of various perceptions, when nothing exists, as it were, to disturb the inner peace and bliss, then that state is called ‘Samadhi’ (17).

18. When the inner-self of the creature feels stable, eternally calm and serene, self-illuminated and separate from the humdrum activities of the gross body vis-à-vis the artificial world, then that state of existence is called ‘Samadhi’ (18).

19. Wherever the mind of the seeker Yogi goes in such a state of his existence, he sees nothing else accept Brahmeverywhere. This is the supreme stature or state of existence (19).

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Canto 3

This Canto deals with the various subtle energy centers called the ‘Chakras’ in the body.

1. All the Gods once again prayed to the Lord, ‘Oh Lord! Please enlighten us on the ‘Nav-chakras’ (the nine subtle energy centres in the body)’. Saying alright, the Lord explained to the Gods—‘The Brahm-Chakra’ is situated in ‘Muladhar’ (i.e. between the genitals and anus, at the base of the spine). It is in the shape of a (divine) womb or a cavity) and has three layers or membranes surrounding or enclosing it. At this place (at the root of the genital organs or ‘Karnika’) lies the ‘Kundalini’—the source of stupendous energy which lies trapped in it like a coiled snakes lying dormant. That stupendously powerful energy entrapped in the ‘Kundalini’, which resembles the radiance and has the potential powers of a burning, raging fire, should be concentrated upon till the time it is roused, kindled or activated from its hibernating and dormant state. (It will unleash a tremendous fount of spiritual energy when activated, much like the energy of an otherwise neutral atom or red hot charcoal which has been covered by ash and lies dormant underneath it till the time it can be revived once again if the ash covering it is removed and it is stoked back to life). It is the site where the abode of Goddess ‘Kamrup’ is located. [The word ‘Kamrup’ means the Goddess who personifies worldly passions and desires.]

All worldly comforts and enjoyments can be accessed and accomplished by worshipping it (or meditating and concentrating one's mind on it). Only this much is said about the first energy circle (1).

2. The 2nd 'Chakra' (subtle energy centre/circle in the body) is called 'Swadhisthan' (located in the genitals). It is like a 6-petal lotus. One should visualise/imagine that there is a red-coloured 'Shivalingam' of the size of a small sprouted kidney-bean or black gram facing to the west (right side) at the center of that lotus. The 'Uddyan Peeth' is located there. By meditating upon and worshipping it (i.e., by activating this center), the seeker/aspirant acquires the ability and powers to endear, enchant, captivate and attract the whole world (i.e., the world is attracted to his charms and follows his dictates. It means that the world can be subjugated by a person who can activate his 'Uddyan Peeth' located at the 'Swadhisthan Chakra') (2).

3. The 3rd 'Chakra' is called 'Naabhi-Chakra'. It is unconventionally shaped like a snake and is surrounded by five layers. (It is situated in the region of the navel). One should visualise/imagine the 'Kundalini' with its fire-like stupendously great powers having a radiance, splendour and glitter of millions of minute suns and the dazzle of lightening, but very tender in form, making its presence felt here. After being activated, this 'Kundalini' has the ability to give immense potential and prowess to the aspirant. The 'Nabhi Chakra' is also known as the 'Manipur Chakra' (which is located in the solar plexus behind the stomach) has great prowess and potential; it bestows all 'Siddhis' (success, achievements and accomplishments) at once because it is the site of the 'Kundalini' (3).

4. The 4th subtle energy center is called 'Anahat Chakra' which is also called the 'Heart Chakra' (located in the region of the heart). It is designed like an 8-petal lotus facing down. One should imagine/visualise an illuminated and splendorous 'Lingam' (phallus-shaped divine 'Swan') in the center of it. It is famed by the name of 'Hans Kala'. It is dear to all. When it is activated, it empowers the aspirant/seeker with the power to subdue and bring the whole world under his control (i.e., the world can be easily overcome by him and he can exercise his command over it) (4).

[Note :-The 'Anahat Chakra' has two features—(i) it is like a lotus facing down, and (ii) like a swan with its neck like an inverted alphabet 'U' and the beak pointing down. The word 'Lingam' means the male phallus; it implies that this 'Chakra' has the same vitality and powers that are possessed by the male organ. It is just a figure of speech, a metaphor for stupendous powers and potentials. The parallel is apt because the heart has the ability to drive a man's behavioural pattern; it is the site of compassion, mercy and love, of passions, lust, desires and yearnings, of hatreds, ill-wills, jealousy and malice. It is here that Brahm is said to reside. It does not imply that Brahm is tarnished with these negative traits and disorders; it simply means that Brahm had cloaked himself, or has assumed these traits, in order to continue forward the process of creation which has been initiated by him alone. Because it is obvious that without worldly desires and characteristics, a

man would turn into a recluse, a renunciate, a hermit, and then there will be no progeny to carry on with, inter alia, the cycle of procreation. A job has to be done, and Brahm has to do it expertly, remaining himself free from the blemishes or taints. He remains aloof as an actor should be once he steps off the stage, because on the stage, he was doing his job of acting, but off-stage, he has a different personality and identity of his own which is quite different what he portrayed on the stage.]

5. The 5th 'Kantha Chakra' is located in the throat. (It is also called 'Vishudha Chakra'). It is 4-finger width in size. The 'Eda' nerve, also called 'Chandra' nerve is located inside it (i.e., passes through it) to the left, whereas the 'Pingla' nerve, also called the 'Surya' or Sun nerve, is located in the right side. The white-coloured 'Sushumna' nerve runs in the centre. The aspirant/seeker who knows and understands this fact is able to accomplish success in the unhindered hearing of the unadulterated cosmic sound called 'Naad' (5).

6. Above it is the 'Talu Chakra' (located in the posterior side of the upper palate or roof of the mouth cavity). There is a continuous flow of the elixir of eternity and bliss called 'Amrit' in it. There are 10 or 12-petal in this lotus. The 'Talu Chakra' is located at the rear end of the buccal cavity and the palate. The aspirant/seeker should visualise/imagine that there is the vastness of the void of space in this 'Chakra' which ultimately helps him to dissolve his mind-intellect complex in the vast, endless and featureless void called space (6).

7. The 7th 'Chakra' is called 'Bhru Chakra' which is thumb-sized. It is located in the forehead between the eyebrows. (It is twin lotus shaped and—) It is illuminated like the flame of a candle. The 'eye of enlightenment and wisdom' is located here. The seeker/aspirant should meditate upon it. When this subtle energy center is activated, the aspirant/seeker is able to acquire complete knowledge of the indescribable cause of all perceptions of the objects of this world (i.e., about Brahm) and, being enlightened, whatever such a person says becomes (or, is in fact) truthful and effective. It is also called 'Agya Chakra' or 'Gyan Chakra' or the subtle energy center which governs enlightenment, wisdom, truthful knowledge, deep insight and erudition) It is also known as 'Kapaal Kand' because it is the route through which the energy of 'Kundalini' rises up to the top of the head. [The word 'Kapal' means head or skull, and 'Kand' means the root. Hence, it is the root of the skull through which the energy rising up from the Kundalini passes through on its way up to the head.] (7).

8. The 8th 'Chakra' is called 'Brahm Randhra-Nirvan Chakra'. (It is located near the top of the head). The size of this 'Chakra' is like the pointed tip of a needle. One should visualise/imagine the presence of an eternal, divine fog or cloud or smoke here. The divine abode of the Lord, which is called 'Jaalandhar', is located here. By concentrating and mediating upon it, the

aspirant gets (i.e., is blessed with) liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation. Hence, Yogis called it the supreme, transcendental 'Brahm Chakra' (because it is related to 'Brahm')(8).

9. The 9th 'Chakra' is called 'Akash' (sky). (It is located on the top of the head). It is shaped like a 16-petal lotus facing upwards. Its central core (or stem) is the producer of the three 'Gunas' (qualities) which are inherent and integral to the nature of a creature—hence, it is visualised/conceived as a hill with three summits. In the center of this 'Chakra' is a filament of divine effulgence of energy, which is slightly bent (or U-shaped) at the tip. The aspirant/seeker should focus his attention at it during mediation. The 'Purnagiri Peeth' (literally, the mount of completeness) is located there; it has the potential to fulfill all the desires of the aspirant/seeker (9).

[Note:- The three quality which are inherent in a creature are—'Sat', 'Raj' and 'Tam'.]

10. Those persons who read and study this 'Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad' daily, become as pure and incorrupt as the fire element, as pleasant as the wind element, and are blessed with all material well-beings and pelf such as wealth, property and prosperity, happy family life such as a loyal wife and faithful sons, elephants and horses symbolising majesty, pomp and high stature in society, buffaloes and cows symbolising success in animal husbandry and abundance of livestock as well as a retinue of servants and maids symbolising lordship and royal majesty. He becomes equivalent to an enlightened and wise ascetic though he is a householder. At the end of human life, he is able to attain the eternal and truthful abode of the supreme Lord from where he does not have to come back into this mortal world again. This is truly what this Upanishad says (10).

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SECTION 2

UPANISHADS OF THE SAM VEDA

The Shantipaath of the Sam Veda Upanishads:

‘OM salutations! Oh supreme Lord! Let all my sense organs of perception such as speech, eyes, ears etc. as well as the parts of my body which are called the organs of action (such as hands, legs etc.), all the ‘Prans’ (the vital forces of life) as well as the strength and powers of my body and the mind-intellect apparatus, my overall vitality, vigour and prowess as well as glory and fame become progressively more robust, be enhanced and attain more exalted stature than what they are at present. Let that Brahm who has been described and defined by the Upanishads never forsake me, and at the same time, let me never deny him. Brahm should always treat me as his one of his own, and let the mutual relationship that is already established between the two of us become sound and eternal, constant and consistent. Let all those auspicious virtues, noble qualities and exemplary characteristic features which are collectively called ‘Dharma’ (i.e. righteousness, probity, propriety) by the Upanishads always and constantly shine and illuminate my inner-self. Let me regularly, persistently and consistently pursue the supreme Brahm as the only target or goal of my life (i.e. let me concentrate on and divert all my energy and activities in this world exclusively towards a single Utopian goal—and that is, attainment or realisation of the supreme Brahm). Let all my three torments be calmed down. [The so-called three ‘Traitaps’ are the torments that the creature is subjected to due to his body such as illness, old age; due to other worldly creatures such as fear from the king, thieves etc.; due to the malignant stars and opposed Gods.] Let us have peace. Let us have peace. Let us have peace.’

This section has the following three Upanishads of the Sam Veda that deal with the theme of Yoga: (II—A) Yog Chudamani Upanishad; (II—B) Yog-raja Upanishad; and (II—C) Jabal Darshan Upanishad.

(II—A)Yogchudamani Upanishad

This Upanishad, as the word ‘Chudamani’ in it suggests, is regarded as the ‘crown jewel’ amongst all the Upanishads dealing with the eclectic concept of ‘Yoga’ (meditative practices). It covers all the major topics that fall in the realm of Yoga. It enumerates and elucidated on the various postures and principles involved in yogic exercises, and espouses about their practical applications and benefits. It expounds on concepts such as vital winds and their harnessing, the various ‘Chakras’ (subtle whirling energy centers in the body), the different ‘Asans’ (sitting posture for meditative exercise), ‘Kundalini’ (the coiled subtle energy center present at the base of the spine) , ‘Pranayam’ (control of breath), ‘Samadhi’ (a trance like state obtained in meditation), the divine sound OM called ‘Pranav’ and its importance and relevance for a Yogi (an ascetic who does Yoga),

the maintenance of a disease free healthy body and mind, the different nerves and veins, contraception methods through Yoga, the various 'Mudras' (special posture to control the nerves and vital energy inside the body) etc. in great detail. It emphasises that youthfulness can be perpetually maintained, death and diseases avoided, self realisation made possible, body be kept healthy and functioning by regular and diligent as well as strident practice of the various Yogic exercises such as Maha Mudra, Nabho Mudra, Uddiyan Bandh, Jalandhar Bandh, Mool Bandh, Khechari, Padmasan and Pranayam practices, all of which have been explained in this Upanishad, as well as by 'Pratyahar' (self restraint), 'Dhyan' (meditation, concentration and contemplation) and 'Samadhi' (a trance-like state of Yoga).

1. Yog Chudamani Upanishad is being described in detail for the guidance, welfare and good of sincere Yogis (ascetics). It is worthy of emulation and practice, and is most profound, unfolding the great secret of Yoga. It provides the ultimate salvation known as 'Kaivalya' (literally, the only salvation which is worth pursuing, aiming for and attaining, which is in effect the realisation of the pure-self as being inseparable from the supreme Self of the cosmos, both being pure consciousness, subtle, sublime and divine) (1).

2. Yoga (mediation) has 6 components, steps or stages—(i) 'Aasan' (sitting posture), (ii) Pranayam (control of the vital winds), (iii) 'Pratyahar' (the regulation of food habits and self restraint), (iv) 'Dharna' (beliefs, conviction, faith), (v) 'Dhyan' (contemplation, concentration and focus of the mind and intellect) and (vi) 'Samadhi' (a trance-like state of existence when the creature is altogether unaware of the gross external world he lives in) (2).

3-4. Two 'Aasan' (postures of the body) are described here—viz. (i) Siddhaasan and (ii) Kamaalsan. An aspirant who cannot see, become aware of or experience the presence of the 6 'Chakras' (subtle whirling energy centers present in the body), 16 'Adhars' (the fundamental worlds, or the symbolic foundations upon which this creation rests), the 'Trilakshaya' (the ability to see or understand 3 dimensions of time, the past, the present and the future), and the 5 'Akash'¹ (the five subtle skies or space, as defined in metaphysics, which are present within the creature) (3)—how can he be expected to acquire success in becoming an expert and accomplished Yogi (ascetic).

Out of the 6 chakras present in the body, the 'Adhar Chakra' (also called Muladhar) has 4 petals. The 'Swadhisthan Chakra' has 6 petals (4).

5. The Chakra present in the region of the navel has 10 petals. The 'Padma Chakra' is located in the heart, and it has 12 petals. 'Vishudha Chakra' has 16 petals. The Chakra with 2 petals is located between the eyebrows and the root of the nose (5)

[Note:- ¹The 5 skies mentioned here are the following—(i) 'Akash', (ii) 'Parakash', (iii) 'Mahakash', (iv) 'Suryakash', and (v) 'Parmakash'.]

6. The Chakra with 1000 petals is located in the path of the 'Brahm-Randhra'. 'Muladhar' is the 1st Chakra, and 'Swadhisthan' is the 2nd (6).

7. The womb/uterus and vagina (i.e. the cosmic female organ of creation) is situated between the two. Since the womb is the center (i.e., location, container and the crucible) of creation, it is called an embodiment or personification of 'Kaam' (lust, passions, cupid, physical arousal and sexual desire. In short, it is the seat of passions and sexual gratification). The lotus with 4 petals is situated in the anus and the rectum (7).

8. It is also called 'Kaam' (literally, the center of passions and lust). In between the two (i.e., the womb area and the rectum area) is present the 'Maha Linga' (the great phallus or the mark or the sign of potent; the clitoris) facing west or to the right. This setup is honoured by mystics (i.e., it is praised by erudite and wise ascetics as the seat of creation). [These verses deal with the internal genital organs.] (8)

9. The 'Manipur Chakra' located in the area of the navel has the shape of a gem. It has the colour of heated gold (i.e., glistening yellow) and is radiant and splendorous like electric (9).

10. It is triangular in outline, and this potential fire is present in the region of the solar plexus¹ and navel. During the stage of 'Samadhi', a brilliant light, glowing and flaring in every direction, is observed and witnessed there (in the Manipur Chakra) (10)

[Note:- ¹Solar plexus is a network of radiating nerves located behind the stomach.]

11. During the practice of Yoga (physical meditation exercise), when one has a divine vision of that glorious and flaring radiant fire (of Manipur Chakra), one finds deliverance from the cycle of transmigration (because this fire symbolically burns through this cycle, thereby liberating the trapped creature and setting it free). 'Pran', which is the vital life infusing energy or the vital wind which gives life to an otherwise dead and inert gross body of the creature, has its abode (i.e., a permanent habitat or location) in the 'Swadhisthan Chakra'. 'Pran' is also called 'Swa' or the 'pure-self'. Since 'Pran' is symbolic of the cosmic sound called 'Pranav', which in turn is synonymous with OM which is the divine word representing Brahm, 'Pran' is also treated as a synonym of the divine word or Brahm (11).

12. Since 'Pran' is located in the 'Swadhisthan', it is also referred to as 'sex, potent, male sex organ', or the region of the solar plexus and navel. Even as a cord or string or thread is passed through a gem (by drilling a hole through it), it (the Kanda)¹ has a coir of nerves passing through it. The 'Kanda',

which resembles a radish, has a knot of nerves, and one of its principal nerve is called 'Sushumna' (12).

[Note :- 'The word *Kanda* literally means an edible root. Here, it indicates a coir consisting of ultra-fine nerves intertwined with each other and forming a knot. It is 12" above the opening of the anus. It measures 12 fingers width in length and is rounded at the top, measuring 4" on either side. It looks as if it is covered by a shroud of white velvet cloth.]

13. The 'Manipur Chakra' which has 12 petals is situated in the region of the navel and solar plexus. It is neutral; that is, it is free of all good (Punya) and evil or bad (Paap) influences or characteristics. [In other words, it remains neutral and neither involves itself in anything good nor hates anything which is bad. It remains indifferent and unattached to everything.] (13)

14. Till the time the essential nature of it (i.e., the fundamental knowledge of the significance and importance of this Chakra) is not fully understood by the creature, he has to keep on wandering in the cycle of transmigration in this mundane world. The 'Yoni' (literally the vagina and the womb) is shaped like the egg of a bird (i.e., it is oblong) and is situated in between the sexual energy center (the phallus) and the navel. [This is in the vicinity of the Kundalini, which is the spiral subtle energy center located at the base of the spine.] (14)

15. A network of 72 thousand Naadis (nerves/veins) originating from this place (the solar plexus) radiates throughout the body. Out of them, 72 nerves are regarded as the chief ones (15).

16-17. The most important out of these 72 are only the following 10 Naadis— (i) Eda, (ii) Pingla, (iii) Sushumna (iv) Gandhari, (v) Hastijihvaha, (vi) Pusa, (vii) Yashaswini, (viii) Alambusa (ix) Kuhu, and (x) Shankhini (16-17)

18. [Location of these important Naadis are described now—] An ascetic (Yogi) should have knowledge of the location of the various Naadis. The 'Eda' Naadi is present to the left (of the nose), while the 'Pingla' Naadi is on the right (of the nose) (18).

19-20. The 'Sushumna' Naadi is located between the two. The 'Hastijihvaha' Naadi is located in the right eye, while 'Gandhari' Naadi is in the left eye. The 'Pusa' is located in the right ear (19),---

---And 'Yashaswini' Naadi is located in the left ear. The 'Alambusa' Naadi is in the mouth, 'Kuhu' is in the sexual organ, and 'Shankhini' is at the root (base) of the spine near the anus in the 'Muladhar Chakra' (20)

21. Each opening (literally, 'a door') of the body (e.g., nose, mouth, ear, eye, anus, genitals) has one nerve each. The spinal cord (literally, the highway or avenue through which the vital wind forces of life pass through) has the 3 vital or strategic nerves passing through it— Eda, Pingla and Sushumna (21).

22. The 3 patron Gods, viz., the Sun, the Moon and the Fire are the bearers (i.e., sustainers, carriers) of 'Pran' (the vital winds which are synonymous with life in a creature). The 5 'Pran Vayus' (the vital winds of life) are the following— (i) Pran, (ii) Apaana, (iii) Udan, (iv) Samana and (v) Vyan (22).

23-24. The sub-vital winds are named as follows—(i) Naag, (ii) Kurma, (iii) Krikal, (iv) Devdutta, and (v) Dhananjay. Inside the body, the main vibrations of the wind, which provides the energy and vitality to sustain the other winds, is called the 'chief Pran', and it is located in the heart. [That is why 'heart beats' of a person are the foremost signs of life.]

The 'Apaana' wind is located in the anus (23),---

---The 'Samana' wind is in the navel region, the 'Udan' wind is in the throat, and the 'Vyan' wind is spread throughout the body. The 5 vital winds are situated at these 5 important parts or points of the body (24).

[Note:- 'Pran' regulates the functioning of the heart and lungs, 'Apaana' controls ingestion, digestion and excretion, 'Samana' helps to keep the internal organs of the body in their place and maintenance equilibrium of the body, 'Udan' helps in exhalation and coughing and pushing the wind upwards, e.g., belching, and 'Vyan' helps in circulation and proper distribution of nourishment to all the tissues of the body; it controls circulation and maintains pressure of the body to enable it to cope with external pressure, such as from gravity and atmosphere.]

25. The wind passing upwards (e.g., belching, coughing, exhaling) has the sub-vital wind called 'Naag' (literally, a serpent or a fire spewing dragon) as its integral component. The closing and opening of the eyes are regulated by the sub-wind called 'Kurma' (literally the tortoise); sneezing is controlled by 'Krikal' sub-wind; while yawning is regulated by 'Devadutta' sub wind (25).

26. The sub-wind called 'Dhananjay' so pervades the whole body that it does not abandon it even after death. [That is why the body does not collapse like a punctured balloon immediately after death of a person when the Pran has exited from his body.] These vital winds keep moving in the various nerves/veins present in a living creature as described above (26).

27. Just like a ball or balloon being thrown or kicked around by players, a creature (an individual) cannot remain stable and steady for long because it is under the spell of Pran, Apaana and other vital winds¹ which constantly keep it restless, agitated, always mobile and fidgety and in a state of constant flux (27).

[Note—¹These winds slap and dash against the sail of a ship on a high sea, as it were, tossing and turning it with the lashing of every gust. The creature cannot sit quietly and calmly in the ship because these vital wind forces continue to flap and flutter the sail, whipping the ship recklessly in the churning waters of the sea represented by this world.]

The creature's body is like the balloon or a football, as it is filled with air called the vital winds. Even as a balloon or a football moves with the slightest touch, is tossed about violently in a squall or gale and it cannot remain at a single point for long, the creature also has an inbuilt and inherent tendency to be always on the move and be fidgety. The biggest proof of this fact is witnessed when a dead body is observed. All the rest of the organs of a corpse are present intact in it, the only imperceptible element which has left the body is 'Pran' or the vital wind. The corpse becomes heavy than a living man and it lies motionless if it is not moved by others; it has no capacity to move on its own and it becomes heavy like lead.]

28. The creature, under the buffeting influence or thrust of the vital winds or airs, is compelled to move upwards or downwards, to the left and to the right (like an air-filled balloon) so swiftly that it loses its bearings and does not know what is happening to it¹ (28).

[Note:-¹The creature is flung around so rapidly in quick succession in waves of emotions and sentiments originating in its heart and mind due to the various influences of the external world that it is not able to discern and make out what is transpiring. It becomes completely disoriented in the topsy-turvy path of transmigration. It does not get a chance to bring itself together and realise who it is, what it truly is, where does it belong, what is the correct direction it should take and which direction it is actually heading to, where should it go and where it should not. Taking the example of a boat in a stormy high sea, the harried creature is so rapidly hurled and tossed about like a ball and thrown over board that it is more concerned with grabbing any float at hand just to avoid getting drowned than to focus on long term goals of life. Its immediate concern is the survival in the next moment, as it were, and not the moment beyond the first. Another good example would be a balloon or a dry leaf or a kite caught in a storm. There is no need to elaborate what happens to them. The allegory will aptly summarise the comic but alarming situation for the reader.]

29. Even as a falcon bird tied to a string can be pulled down, a creature who is tied by the various 'Gunās', the inherent qualities present in a creature, such as—Satwic or noble qualities, Rajasic or worldly qualities, and Tamasic or lowly and meanly qualities, can be pulled down by the vital winds/airs such as Pran and Apan. [The 3 Gunas or qualities are likened to the string, the creature to the bird, and the vital airs/winds to the bird-catcher.] (29)

30. 'Pran' is pulled down by the 'Apan' wind, whereas the 'Apan' wind is pulled up by the 'Pran'. As a result, the creature oscillates up and down due to the tug and pulls created by the Pran and Apan winds respectively¹. A person who realises or understands this subtle and symbolic movement of the creature, which it is compelled to do as long as these winds are present in the body and located separately and push and pull it, is known as an expert in the science and philosophy of Yoga (30).

[Note :- ¹The inherent tendency of the *Pran*, which is the vital wind residing in the upper part of the body between the heart-lungs and the nose, is to lift

the creature to a higher state of noble, righteous, virtuous, auspicious and spiritual existence, to become wise and enlightened. On the contrary, the *Apaan* winds lives in the intestine and passes down through the anus. It symbolises the downward drag on the creature's spiritual upliftment, pulling it down towards the grosser aspects of creation and the materialistic world which is not only gross but also filthy and worthless like the excretory matters present in the intestine. It also symbolises passions, evils, vices, perversion and attachments to the worldly things at large, and their accompanying perplexities, bewilderments and hassles leading to restlessness and moral turpitude and degradation. This oscillation between the spiritual upliftment and moving upwards towards goodness, and spiritual degradation, moving downwards towards the gross world of sensual pleasures, leads a creature to a continuous cycle of birth and death —this oscillation is like the bouncing of a ball upwards and downwards from the surface of the earth. One must remember that a lot of symbolism, metaphors and allegories have been used in the Upanishadic texts to explain things. One should be wise not to lose the spirit while getting bogged down by the literal meaning of the words; one should not lose the wood while searching for the tree. The 'Pran' wind here symbolises the upward drift which the pure consciousness is inherently inclined to, while the 'Apaan' winds pulls it down towards the attractions of the world. The creature remains trapped between the two forces.]

31-32. The breath, when inhaled, creates a sound vibration resembling the Sanskrit alphabet 'Sa', and when it is exhaled, it produces a sound vibration equivalent to the alphabet 'Ha'. In this way, while exhaling and inhaling, a person or a creature (known as the "Jiva") unconsciously, automatically, un-perceptibly, by nature and even without being aware of doing it or wishing to do it, continues to incant or chant or repeat the Mantra formed by these two alphabets —which are 'Ha+Sa = Hansa' (literally meaning a divine swan which is considered the most wise and purest form of bird)¹. [Also refer to verse nos. 82-83 in this context.] (31)

The result is that a creature (here the Yogi) continuously repeats this Mantra 'Hans' 21 thousand times in a single day, including day and night² (32).

[Note :-¹The bird Swan is considered the most pure, clean, wise, erudite and clever among the birds. It is said to eat pearls, which means it picks up and accepts only the best amid the variety of things available to it in the form of an assortment of various gems and jewels. It is also reputed to drink milk leaving aside the water content in it. It is also the vehicle of Goddess Saraswati, the patron Goddess of knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, speech and learning. Hence, the reference to a swan while describing a creature conscious of the vital wind or Pran passing through him means the basic, inherent and intrinsic tendency of that wisened and intelligent creature is to be the best, most pure and divine, wise, awakened and enlightened, adroit, clever and sagacious like the swan, and pick all the goodness and forsake all

that is bad in this world. Saraswati rides on a swan, symbolising the creature's inborn enlightenment and excellence of his mental caliber. Symbolically, Saraswati resides in his Pran because it rides on the swan, i.e., in his heart, throat and mind—that is, his heart has purity of emotions, he speaks good of all, and his words are sought after by all as priceless gems of wisdom, and his mind is intelligent, discerning and noble.

The alphabet 'Ha' is sounded by the vibration of the exhaled wind passing through the vocal cords present in the throat or the wind pipe which connects to the nose, while the alphabet 'Sa' is sounded by the root of the tongue which opens into the mouth when the breath is inhaled. Both the nose and the mouth open in the same cavity called the throat. Hence, the inter relationship between 'Ha' and 'Sa' is evident. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the divine swan, but he was unaware of his divinity and sublimity, his exalted stature, till that was pointed out to him in this verse. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must do not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan.

²During the 24 hour period covering a single day and night, a person inhales and exhales, or breathes, roughly 21 thousand times because each cycle of inhalation and exhalation is equivalent to saying one Mantra 'Hans' consisting of the two syllables 'Ha and Sa'.]

33. For Yogis, this is the 'Ajapa Gayatri'¹ which can provide them with Mukti (liberation and deliverance from this world, emancipation and salvation for their souls). By merely invoking it, one can overcome or get rid of all sins and their evil effects (33).

[Note:- ¹The word *Ajapa* means 'non-Japa' or a silent, effortless, imperceptible, involuntary, inaudible and quiet repetition of some holy words. The holy words are the Mantras which have divine and sublime powers. The Mantra referred to here is the great 'Gayatri Mantra' which is 'OM BHURBHUVAH SVAH TATSAVITURVARNYAM BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAHI DHIYO YO NAH PRACHODYAT', meaning 'OM is the supreme, transcendental Brahm. He is the lord of creation of the terrestrial, the celestial and heavenly worlds. That Brahm is luminous like the sun. He is excellent, the best, the most exalted, a destroyer of sins, and a divine entity. May he imbibe, infuse and inspire our intellect with wisdom and enlightenment so that we are purified and move on the righteous and noble path'. The 4 phrases of the Gayatri Chanda are clearly marked by small numerals in this Mantra. This Mantra appears in the Rig Veda (3/62/10), the Sam Veda (1462), and Yajur Veda (3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/6).

'Ajapa' is, scientifically speaking, related to electrophysiology. Silent chanting or incantation of some words in special configurations, having special powers, generates an electric current and a small voltage in the tissues and cells of the body. The tissues producing electric current produce

vibrations which have certain frequencies. These frequencies are different in audible Japa, but the basic operating fundamentals are the same.

34. There has not been in the past and shall not be in the future any 'Vidya' (knowledge, learning, expertise, skill, philosophy and science), any 'Japa' (repetition of holy words) and any 'Gyan' (wisdom, enlightenment, awareness, consciousness and erudition) which was, which is, and which shall be akin to or equivalent to this aforementioned 'Ajapa Gayatri'—i.e., the silent, effortless, unspoken, imperceptible and regular repetition of the Gayatri Mantra (as described in verse no. 33) (34).

35. The knowledge of this 'Gayatri Mantra' is the skill or instrument that empowers the aspirant Yogi to bear the vital forces of life called 'Pran'. It is therefore called 'Pran Vidya' (the knowledge which entitles and enables a Yogi to get the requisite strength to bear the vital winds and put them to their proper use). Since 'life' is vital for existence, it is also called 'Maha Vidya' (the great and superior knowledge pertaining to life and existence). It has its origin in the 'Kundalini'¹. A person who realises or understands this is called wise and skilled, expert and adroit in the knowledge of the Vedas (35).

[Note :- ¹The *Kundalini* is a coil-like center of subtle energy lying at the base of the spine. It is generally lying in a dormant state. By doing Yogic practices, the stupendous energy trapped in its coils can be released by the unplugging of its mouth which opens into the 'Sushumna' nerve. This energy then rises up the spinal cord and ultimately reaches the top of the head. The Yogi who practices this Kundalini activation, called 'Kundalini Jagran', experiences brilliance and dazzle unmatched by any other experience.]

36. The 'Kundalini energy' is located above/at the top of the 'Kanda' (see verse no. 12 and 44) in the form of a coil having 8 spirals. It covers the mouth of 'Brahm Dwar'¹ (literally, the doorway leading to Brahm). It remains ever present, but dormant, in that place (36).

[Note—¹Since the 'Sushumna' nerves leads to the Brahm-Randhra Chakra present at the top of the head which is considered the abode of the supreme, sublime and transcendental Brahm, it is also called the 'Brahm Dwar', the ascetic's "door to Brahm realisation".]

37. The stupendously supreme, Goddess-like divine and sublime cosmic energy (i.e., Kundalini) remains dormant and in a sleeping state. It keeps the door or the entrance point of the channel leading to Brahm residing in the 'Mana' of a creature (i.e., the Brahm which lives in the realms of the mind and the intellect, the heart and the soul of the creature) blocked or closed or choked by its own mouth. This entrance point is called 'Brahm's doorway', which is actually the opening of the 'Sushumna' nerve. [The coil of Kundalini is like a serpent, with its hood blocking the lower end of the spinal cord like a plug in the neck of a bottle.] (37)

38. By the practice of 'Vahiniyog' (literally, the 'fire Yoga'; see verse no. 107), it becomes activated. Simply put, the 'fuse' is ignited by the subtle fire produced or kindled or stoked by Yoga to make this energy active and viable. Once activated, it assumes the form of 'light', and accompanied by (or pushed by or impelled by) a determined mind as well as the forceful push of the vital winds, it gradually snakes up or rises up the 'Sushumna' nerve (like a flexible needle snaking up the intestine or veins during a micro-hole surgery as done during endoscopy by a doctor)¹ (38).

[Note :-¹To understand the phenomenon, one can imagine a flexible probe or scope passing up one's rectum during a medical process called endoscopy. The rectum and the lower intestine have a titillating experience as a result of the probe moving inside it. The entire process has been elaborately described in a note to verse no. 107 of this Upanishad.]

39. Even as a person can open the locks of the door to his house with a key, Yogis can open the door to liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation by the use of this Kundalini (39).

40. [Yogic exercise such as 'Pranayam' is being described here—] The aspirant Yogi should sit in a posture known as 'Padmasan' (the "lotus posture"), and keep the palms of his hands one on the top of the other, both facing upwards, on his lap. The head should be tilted downwards in the front so that the chin touches the chest (see also verse no. 106).

Then he should focus his attention and concentrate himself on Brahm while slowly inhaling and exhaling deeply. The 'Pran Vayu' (the 1st of the five vital winds residing in the lungs and heart) should be pulled slowly inwards while the 'Apan Vayu' (the wind force passing down in the intestine and the rectum) should be pulled up. By practicing 'Pranayam' (literally, exercising control over the vital winds, harnessing them, specially the breath), a person experiences an unique and matchless surge of sublime energy and subtle strength (40).

[Note:- The word *Padmasan* literally means 'sitting like a lotus'. It basically involves sitting cross-legged on the floor, spine erect and both the hands held straight down, bent at the elbows, with the palms facing upward and resting in the lap just opposite the groins. The process of 'Pranayam' is further elucidated in verse nos. 63, 70 and 89-112 of the Upanishad.]

41. The sweat which emerges due to this exercise (of doing Pranayam) should be rubbed off in the skin itself (see also verse no. 105. It should not be dried by swabbing by a cloth). One should forsake salty, sour, pungent and bitter food during the period when he does 'Pranayam', and instead lay stress on milk and milk products (41).

[Note :- (i) The concept and process of doing Pranayam has been repeatedly stressed in this Upanishad in different contexts and different words. See also verse nos. 63-64 and 89-108 of this canto. (ii) The time needed to achieve success in Pranayam has been set

out as 1 year in verse no. 42, whereas 2 months is the time needed to cleanse the set out as 1 year in verse no. 42, whereas 2 months is the time needed to cleanse the nerves/veins in the body as per verse no. 98]

42. A Yogi aspirant who observes self restraint and abstinence from sex and regularises his food habits (observes dietary restrictions) is able to achieve successes in his Yoga practices within a period of one year. There is no doubt about it (42).

43. A Yoga aspirant should eat only sweet, mild and bland food. He should keep a quarter of his stomach empty. [That is, he should eat only half full of his stomach, take a quarter full of water and keep the remaining quarter of the stomach empty for air.] The food taken in this manner is said to be equivalent to the offerings made to Lord Shiva, and the person is called non-indulgent or self-restrained in food habits (43).

44. The 'Kundalini' having 8 coils and situated above the 'Kanda' (see verse no. 12 and 36) has the potentials to provide 'Moksha' or bestow liberation and deliverance to the aspirant Yogi. On the other hand, it is shackling and entangling for those who are ignorant and fools (44).

45. A Yogi who knows about the following postures of Yoga attains liberation and emancipation (called Mukti)—'Maha Mudra' (verse nos. 65-70), 'Nabho Mudra' (verse nos. 52-64), 'Uddiyan Bandh' (verse nos. 48-49), 'Jaalandhar Bandh' (verse nos. 50-51) and 'Mool Bandh' (verse nos. 46-47) (45).

46. The process of 'Mool Bandh' (literally meaning the closing or stopping of the root) is this—the area of the anus should be severely pressed by the heel and firmly closed or put under pressure. The result would be that the 'Apan Vayu' would be restricted from escaping from the anus, and instead it would be reverted upwards (46).

47. This process is used to mix the two vital winds called 'Pran' and 'Apan', resulting in decrease in excretion of stool and urine. By constant practice of 'Mool Bandh' posture, old people can become younger (47).

48. Big birds (such as vultures, eagles, kites, herons, falcons) get peace and relaxation when they fly at high altitudes. Similarly, the practice of 'Uddiyan Bandh' posture helps in defeating (i.e., conquering and overcoming) death like a lion defeats an elephant (48).

49. Pulling the muscles of the part of the belly below the navel inwards is called 'Paschimottan'. The knotting of the belly called 'Uddiyan Bandh' formed as a result of this pulling in of the muscles is done in this region by

the pulling of the muscles inwards and holding them stiff in their knot-like stiffened position (49).

50. The 'Jaalandhar Bandh' refers to the stoppage of the flow of fluids of the body downwards, and withholding them in the upper part. It is said that this practice destroys all sorrows, pains, troubles and torments that afflict the Yogi. [The word 'Jaalandhar' also means 'retention of urine or water in the body'. In medial parlance, it is known as dropsy. In Yoga, it restricts urine output.] (50)

51. In the 'Jaalandhar Bandh' posture, the head is bent forwards to such an extent that the chin touches the region of the heart and rests on the chest. By doing this, the nectar or ambrosia of life does not either fall towards the fire nor goes towards the wind. It becomes stable. [That is, the vital energy that sustains life is neither wasted away in the form of sperms and other excretory matters of the body which are hot in their content, or released in the form of breath exhaled out from the nose or passes out in the form of flatus from the rectum.] (51)

52. The next posture called 'Mudra' is called 'Khechari'. This involves focusing the sight at a spot in the center of the eyebrows (above the root of the nose; see also verse no. 91-106), the tongue is inverted backwards and tucked in the center of the palate above the gullet.

[To enable the tongue to accomplish this marvellous feat by doing a backward somersault, the tongue is first elongated by constant stretching and pulling of it, piercing it and moving it in various angles to make it flexible and malleable and making it possible to physically turn it inwards and tuck it in the palate. See also verse no. 57.] (52)

53. Those who know and practice this 'Khechari Mudra' are freed from the worries of and not troubled by diseases, death, hunger, thirst, fainting etc. (53).

54. A person who is well versed with the 'Khechari Mudra' does not suffer from disease, nor does he find any attraction doing worldly deeds. No obstruction, hindrances or obstacles can ever dare to go near him in his spiritual endeavours (54).

55. All 'Siddhas' (i.e., those who have special mystical powers and are accomplished and attained ascetics) praise the 'Khechari Mudra' by practicing of which the mind and the tongue wander freely in the sky or the vast, fathomless space¹ (55).

[Note :- ¹The mind with its faculty of thought manifested in the form of the faculty of speech represented by the tongue wander in the sky, i.e., the mind and its manifest form, the speech, which expresses what the mind thinks,

become freed or liberated from the fetters that tie a normal creature's mind to his gross body and through it to the physical world. He enjoys the same sense of weightless freedom, a floating sensation that a person does when for example, he is gliding in the sky, or an astronaut or a cosmonaut experiences while floating in the outer space attached to the mother space vehicle with only a tether. The aspirant *Yogi* who practices this 'Khechari Mudra' experience his mind to have attained the same type of freedom and liberation, and this experience sets him virtually free. Since he is liberated and not bound by any fetters to this world, his speech also finds freedom in the sense that it does not have to say anything to please the world. It will say only what the liberated mind wishes to express, which is the 'truth', as opposed to speaking falsehoods and insincere words just to appease the world seem pleasant and acceptable for it.

The word *Khechari* has 2 syllables—'Khe' meaning 'sky, space, void', and 'Chari' meaning 'roaming, wandering, sojourning'. Hence, the combined word means 'to be liberated and roam freely'.]

56. The 'Khechari Mudra' is the focus or center or core of all the veins and capillaries which branch off to provide nourishment and nutrition to all parts of the body. [This is because the site where the muscles are kept taught for doing the 'Khechari Mudra' is located in the 'Kanda' area, and it is from the latter that all the veins and nerves branch off to all parts of the body according to *Yoga* philosophy.] (56)

57. The aspirant who has covered the mouth of the gullet with the tip of his tongue (see verse no. 52) does not ejaculate even after being passionately embraced by a beautiful woman (57).

58. As long as the aspirant is engrossed in this 'Khechari Mudra' posture, he does not ejaculate (literally, the 'drops' or 'Bindu' do not pass out from him; here the drops refer to semen). And as long as those 'drops' (of semen) remain in the body (i.e., the vital energy is preserved inside the body), what or where is the fear from death (or degeneration and loss of vitality of the body)? (58)

59. [Now, both the sexes —male and female—are addressed in these verses—] Even if due to some reason the 'drops' (the semen) fall into the fierce, raging, flaming, radiant and glorious fire element (representing the passionate attraction posed by the female sexual organs, or the vaginal fluid), it can still be forcibly retained and stopped from being ejaculated, i.e., further ejaculations can be prevented, and the conception in the womb can be averted by adopting the 'Yoni Mudra' (literally, the *Yogic* posture directed at the control of the process of conception in the female womb—see verse nos. 46-47). These 'drops' (of semen) can be directed upwards (i.e., retracted back before their final ejaculation from the male organ into the female organ and resulting in conception) even at the last moment (59).

60. The 'fluid' is of two colours—one has a white/silvery colour, and the other has a red/blood colour. The white fluid is called 'Shukla' (the white sperms floating in the male semen) while the red fluid is called 'Maharaj' (the menstrual fluid present in the female organs) see also verse no. 62 below (60).

61. The 'Raj' (the menstrual fluid) which is red coloured has its place of origin in the radiant and glorious 'Ravi' (the female ovary). The 'Shukra' ("Shukla"—the white-coloured semen containing the sperms) has its abode in the 'Chandra'¹ (the male testicles). The union, connection, alliance or conjunction of the white male semen (containing the male sperm) and the red coloured female fluid (containing the female ova/egg) is difficult and very rare² (even as it is very difficult and absolutely rare that the moon and the sun can ever come together in the sky) (61).

[Note :- ¹The word "Ravi" means the sun, while the word "Chandra" means the moon. The sun is a repository of a burning and ferocious fire that can burn and scorch anything that comes in its contact. The sun provides the energy that not only sustains and nourishes life in this world but also provides the necessary environs and the breeding ground for it. The sun light helps to carry on the process of photosynthesis, without which there will be no vegetation, and without the latter, no animal kingdom can survive. The moon, on the other hand, is regarded in mythology as the pitcher containing the ambrosia, or the extract of the elixir of life. In this Upanishad, the semen is the white fluid supposedly dripping from the moon which is a receptacle of this divine fluid, while the female organ is regarded as the sun because it not only harbours life but also nourishes and sustains it by providing heat and energy. It provides the basic environs in which life can be made tenable in the crucible of the female womb once the spark of the male sperm is injected into it through the opening of the vagina.

There are two reasons for saying that the "Shukra" has its origin in the "Chandra". One is that in mythological lore, the Moon (Chandra) is said to be a pitcher of Amrit, the nectar-like liquid that creates and sustains life, an euphuism for the sperm. The second reason is that the Moon is white in colour like the semen, and hence it is a symbolic visible transparent container from where the life-building semen pours forth. Thus, the Moon is a symbolic form of the male testicles.

²This fact is sustained by medical science which says, simply put, that hundreds of sperms float or swim in the male semen, heading towards the female egg, but only a lucky few are able to fertilise it.]

62. The 'Bindu' or drop (semen containing the sperm) is akin to Brahm, the primary creator, while the female fluid called 'Raj' is akin to 'Shakti' or the divine energy responsible for breeding, facilitating, nourishing, sustaining, developing, enhancing and propagating creation.

The 'drop' or 'Bindu' is like the moon (which is supposed to drip nectar of life), while the 'Raj' is akin to the sun (see verse no. 61 above). The supreme stature or state of ultimate bliss and beatitude, joy and felicity is achieved only by the union of this 'Bindu' (the male semen) and the 'Raj' (the female vaginal fluid) [See also verse no. 63 below] (62).

[Note :- (i) Verse nos. 57-59 tells us about contraception methods according to ancient sages. Simply put, they mean that the practioners of 'Khechari Mudra' can have sex with their partner but they have the ability to prevent conception by withholding their sperms by Yogic practices and the accompanying vitality and strength acquired by practicing this Mudra.

(ii) Verse no. 62 describes the sun as being equivalent to the female sexual fluid called 'Raj'. This is true and only for symbolic purposes. Everyone knows that the sun sustains life on earth—right from the process of photosynthesis in the plants to the control of seasons, the monsoon rains, the weather and the climate, generation of vitamin D for bones, and to provide 'day light' without which the generation of vitamin D for bones, and to provide 'day light' without which the earth will freeze to the ice ages. The moon, on the other hand, is likened to the male semen. Obviously there is no wonder that lovers find 'moonlight' more charming and alluring than the daylight of the sun. The moon is always associated with love, romance, affection, amorous emotions and cupid, which is usually very active during the night when the moon shines bright. The sun, on the other hand, is synonymous with life, energy, sustenance and power. It is also known that the sun is a boiling cauldron of combustible gases, not solid rock like the earth. So the comparison of it with hot 'fluid' is also very apt.

(iii) The use of the word 'Bindu' or drop is very significant in the context of life. The word 'drop' applies to a liquid or fluid such as water, and not to solids or even to semi-solids, for in the latter cases, we will use the words a blob, a granule, a sphere, a globule, a bulb or a billet or a treacle. Water is an essential ingredient of life. Even solids can be said to be 'solidified liquids', as in the case of water solidifying as ice or any molten metal cooling down to its solid form. Only a liquid with a reasonable amount of viscosity such as water and semen can form the rounded shape very specific and peculiar to a 'drop' which here refers to semen.]

63. When the female fluid called 'Raj' (as described in verse no. 62) becomes one or coalesces with the male 'Bindu' or the semen (or the sperm contained in the semen) moving or swimming towards it under the influence or force of the vital winds (i.e., by being pushed or impelled forward by the forces of the vital life driving winds present in the body), the body of the male becomes glorious, fulfilled, accomplished, heavenly blissful and like a supernatural, brilliant and divine being¹ or the creator Brahma himself (63).

[Note :- ¹This is the point of time when the male acquires the stupendous authority and potentials to 'create new life' even as Brahma injects the mother Nature with the cosmic spark of life, a power considered as the exclusive domain of Brahma. Not even the highest or the most superior of

Gods has this authority, power and potential to 'create' new life. In this aspect, the sperm is superior to the Gods, and the male who possess this sperm is like the creator Brahma. The male, after fertilising the female egg, experiences the brilliant authority and the majestic powers possessed by Brahma, the creator. For a fleeting moment, there remains no duality or distinction between the male and the supreme creator of the cosmos; they become synonymous with each other, because both of them have the 'power to create new life'. Both become one. Hence, the use of the adjective 'heavenly, supernatural and divine' has been used in the text. The pent-up emotions and desires to 'create' are fructified and bear fruit in the form of fertilisation of the female egg by the male sperm. This results in the conception in the female womb, which is the sign of the 'successful creation of a new life'. This is a rare achievement—to create something from two different entities, the product bearing the characteristic features of both the parents but remarkably different from them in having its own independent outlooks, thought processes, intelligence, behaviours and demeanours. Virtually, it has come into existence from nothing because the sperm and the ova have no physical gross body, are in thick fluid shape and are microscopic in dimension. Taken independently, neither the sperm nor the ova have any resemblance to the body of either the father or the mother respectively. Their union in the womb is also so secret that, for all practical purposes, the infant born appears to have come from nowhere, as if by a divine miracle. This makes the male feel 'accomplished and fulfilled'. And the final success in achieving something or doing something that only Brahma could do makes him feel blissful, accomplished and extremely happy. He feels that he has some divine powers.]

64. The seeker/aspirant who knows the intricacies of the mystery behind the link or connection between the 'Raj' (the female fluid needed for procreation) and the Sun, between the 'Shukra' (the male white sperm present in the semen) and the Moon, as well as between the two of them (i.e., the union or fusion of the female 'Raj' and the male 'Shukra') is indeed known as an expert in the art and science of Yoga. [The symbolic link between the two has been explained in note to verse nos. 62 and 63 above.] (64)

65. The 'Maha Mudra' posture is one by which the network of Naadis (nerves) are subjected to a process known as 'Shodhan' which means the act of purifying them, of purging them of all impurities, cleaning and de-clogging them, disciplining their functioning and reforming and revitalising them. It also entails the control of the movement of the Sun and the Moon¹ as well as the assimilation and absorption of the essential elements into the body (to provide it with the life sustaining vital nutrients and nourishment as well as energy and vitality)². [See also verse no. 67 and 95 below.] (65)

[Note:- ¹The control of the Sun and the Moon is symbolic of control over the reproductive organs because they are deemed to be the receptacles of the female reproductive fluids and the male sperms respectively.

²The nourishment and absorption of vital nutrients is symbolic of the development of embryo inside the womb of the mother by absorbing nutrition for the mother.]

66. [The process of doing the 'Maha Mudra' posture is described now—] The left leg should be folded in and its heels pressed against the anus and the groin area. The chin should be touched to the chest. The right leg should be spread straight out. The two hands should then be extended to hold the toes and the sole of this right outstretched leg. The stomach/abdomen should be first filled with inhaled air, and then this air should be slowly, gradually exhaled. This is the 'Maha Mudra', and the process can destroy all the ailments of the body and remove all the obstacles and hindrances in the spiritual upliftment of the seeker/aspirant Yogi (ascetic) (66).

67. In the beginning of this exercise, the purification or detoxification or the unclogging of the air passages should be done. The air should be inhaled through the left nostril called 'Chandrashen'. After that, the left nostril should be closed by the hand and the air should be inhaled through the right nostril called 'Suryashen'.

[That is, at first the inhalation should be done by the left nostril and later on by the right nostril, and the process should be alternated so as to de-clog them both on one by one. The inhaled air is used to clear the air passages, or purge the internal organs of all the dust, pollen and other polluting particles adhering to it.]

When the two passages (i.e. the passage through which the wind is inhaled, and the one through which it is exhaled) give a uniform sound (i.e. when the sound of the air passing through these two corridors or nostrils sound exactly alike), then this practice should be stopped, because it would have achieved its objective of de-clogging and purifying of the air passages (67).

68. By doing this practice, all food, whether likable or not, delicious and tasty or not, becomes delicious and enjoyable by the Yogi. Even after over-eating or imbibing poison, this exercise (as described in verse nos. 66 and 67) makes it (i.e., the excess food or poison eaten) as easily digestible as it were nectar. [This process helps to enhance the immune system of the body.] (68)

69. Practitioners of this potent and great Yogic exercise (i.e., Maha Mudra) are freed from the chance of contracting in future such diseases as Phthisis (T.B.), which is the disease related to the air passage, as well as from leprosy, which is a skin disease but has its origin in the disturbed digestive organs, and fistula, piles (haemorrhoids), indigestion/acidity etc., which are all digestive organs related diseases (69). [See also verse no. 108-109, 116-117.]

70. This posture and Yoga exercise called ‘Maha Mudra’ gives great successes and accomplishments, but it should not be told (taught) to ineligible, incompetent or unworthy persons. It should be kept a closely guarded secret from them (because if not done under proper guidance and supervision, it might lead to catastrophic results) (70).

71. The aspirant Yogi should sit in a lonely/secluded/serene place in the ‘Padmasan’ posture (see verse no. 40) with a straight spine. He should focus his sight on the tip of the nose and repeat the holy Mantras (i.e., do Japa) of the imperishable divine cosmic word called ‘Omkar or OM’ (71).

72. [The metaphysical concept of creation is being described now—] OM is the hypothetical name assigned to the sublime and divine entity called the supreme, ultimate and transcendental Brahm. He is eternal, constant and uniform, is pure, incorrupt, pristine and refined, is wise, enlightened, erudite, sagacious and adroit, is without an alternative, is faultless, without any blemishes and shortcomings, is holy, divine, subtle and invisible, is eternal, immutable and universal, is one and the only one of his kind, is beyond the purview of the sense organs of perceptions pertaining to this world because Brahm represents the transcendental state of cosmic Consciousness, is the one who remains uniform, constant, unchanging and immutable in the three dimensions of time—the past, the present and the future.

From him was produced the self-illuminated and radiant effulgence of cosmic energy that was the primordial and primary source of creation. It was called “Paraa-Shakti”, the supreme and dynamic form of the cosmic and transcendental Energy of creation.

From the Atma (i.e., the macrocosmic soul of creation) emerged the Akash (the space/sky element), from it emerged the wind element, from the wind was created the fire element, from the fire came into being the water, and the water finally created the earth element.

These 5 primary ingredients or elements of creation are called ‘Bhuts’ and their respective patron deities or Gods are Shiva, Ishwar, Rudra, Vishnu and Brahma respectively. Out of them, Brahma is the creator, Vishnu is the sustainer, nourisher and caretaker as well as the protector of the creation, and Rudra is the annihilator or concluder.

Vishnu represents the ‘Satwic qualities’, Brahma stands for the ‘Rajasic qualities’, and Rudra symbolise the ‘Tamsic qualities’ of creation¹.

Amongst the Gods, Brahma was the first to come into being. Brahma was created to produce and propagate the world, Vishnu to sustain, nourish, develop, enhance and protect it, while Rudra was created for its final death and conclusion. Indra was created to enjoy it. ‘Lokas’ (worlds), Gods, animals, birds and humans as well as inanimate and immovable creatures (e.g., trees)—they are all produced by Brahma, the creator of this vast world. Out of them, the body of humans is made by a combination of the 5 elements, as mentioned above, in different proportion.

The organs of perceptions and actions, the world that is the object of these organs, the vital winds which keep the body active, the mind-intellect and its attention towards the external world giving rise to the latter's awareness and its accompanying 'Ahankar' (ego, arrogance, haughtiness and pride)—are all comparatively gross in nature. The primary energy responsible for their creation is therefore called 'Gross Nature'. These entities constitute the external body of the creature (known as the Jiva), and it is called its 'gross body'.

The 'gross body' has its counterpart in the subtler realms called the 'subtle body' of the creature. That is, each organ of sense perception has its subtler counterpart—the organ of mouth has speech, skin has touch, eye has sight, nose has smell, and tongue has taste. Similarly, there are 5 organs of actions present externally, and there are their subtler counterparts internally called their function. The gross ones are the hands, legs, mouth, genitals and anus. Their subtler functions are the following—doing deeds, movement, eating, producing and excretion respectively.

Likewise, the brain is the gross form and the intellect is its subtler counterpart. Belching, flatus, heartbeat, pulse etc. are the grosser forms of wind, while digestion, movement of intestine (the peristaltic movement), the functioning of the lungs (breathing), circulation of blood, absorption of nutrition and assimilation, maintenance and equilibrium inside the body, urination, formation and expulsion of stool are the subtler functioning of the vital winds. All these are called the 2nd body or the subtle/minute body of the creature³. It is also called the 'Linga body of the creature'.

This body of the creature has all the 3 Gunas listed above (i.e., Sat, Raj and Tam) in varying configurations. This distinguishes one creature from the other, because no two creatures will have the three Gunas in the same proportion and configuration². The Gunas constitute the causal body of the creature.

All creatures have these 3 types of bodies—the gross, the subtle and guna-driven causal body.

Every living creature has 4 states of existence—'Jagrat' (waking state), 'Swapna' (dreaming state), 'Sushupta' (deep sleep state), and 'Turiya' (the transcendental state of blissfulness).

Taijas, Pragma, Vishwa and Atma are the four divine 'Purush' (the consciousness acting through different bodies or planes of existence) who are the patron deities or Gods of these four states of existence respectively.

The 'Vishwa' enjoys the gross world, the 'Taijas' enjoys loneliness, serenity and calmness, 'Pragma' enjoys the bliss of the causal body, and 'Atma' is a witness to all this and is beyond all of them put together. (72)

[Note :- ¹The 'Satwic' quality is the best quality present in the creation. It stands for righteousness, nobility of thought and action. The 'Rajasic' quality is the 2nd quality which is considered the medium quality present in a creature, giving rise to worldly passions, desires and creativity. The 'Tamsic' quality is the lowliest and mean quality amongst the three and it leads to evils, vices, sins and ultimate death.

Brahma and Rudra maintain the ecological balance in the world, while Vishnu and Indra represent the creature that is designated to enjoy the fruits of the creation and sustain it in order to continue to enjoy it.

²The proportion of the 3 Gunas decided the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclinations of the creature. For example, a person with a greater proportion of Satwic (noble and virtuous) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of either Raj or Tam qualities. So, we can say that sage, seers, ascetics, prophets, scholars are generally enlightened persons with a predominant high degree of Satwic quality. Kings and householders who live a good and noble life are examples of those with a predominance of Raj qualities alongside a good sprinkling of Sat qualities as compared to kings who are cruel and unjust, for in their case the lowest and meanest quality called Tam is more active than the other two. Sinners, such as killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats and other evil persons in the society are those with high concentration of Tam quality in them.]

73. The all-pervading, immanent 'Pranav' (which is a synonym of the supreme Brahm) remains indifferent or non-indulgent during all the stages of consciousness that a creature enjoys. [That is, Pranav remains as a mere witness, without getting emotionally involved in the various acts done by a creature.] (73)

74. It is 'Pranav' (Brahm) that is manifested, revealed and illuminated or highlighted in the form of 3 divine letters which constitute the divine and sublime primordial and primary cosmic word called OM. These 3 letters are 'A', 'U' and 'M' which represent the 3 'Varnas' (i.e., the classes of people depending upon their characteristic into which the society have been classified into—the noble, the medium and the lowly), the 3 Vedas (Rig, Sam and Yajur Vedas), the 3 'Lokas' (i.e., the nether or subterranean, mortal or terrestrial and heavenly or immortal worlds), the 3 Gunas (i.e., the 3 qualities called Sat, Raj and Tam), as well as the 3 letters and 3 'Swars' (i.e., the vowels, the consonants and the 'Maatras' or half syllables used to complete the sound of the consonants). These groups of 3 entities mentioned here symbolically represent the whole gamut of existence consisting of the various creatures with their different characteristics and features, their virtues, habits and qualities as well as their faculties of speech and thinking processes which mark the presence of intelligent life in this creation.

The 1st letter 'A' symbolically resides in the eye of the creature during the waking state of consciousness, the 2nd letter 'U' similarly resides in the throat during the dreaming state of consciousness, while the 3rd letter 'M' dwells in the heart in the deep sleep state of consciousness of the creature (74).

75. The gross 'Viraat Vishwa' is a manifestation of the letter 'A', the radiant and subtle 'Hiranyagarbh' represents the letter 'U', and the causal,

attributeless, enlightened entity Ishwar symbolises the letter 'M'. The letter 'A' has the natural quality called 'Rajasic' (desires to enjoy the world, having passions); its colour is red and it represents the creator of the world, Brahma. The letter 'U' has the quality called 'Satwic' (righteousness, nobility and virtuousness); its colour is white or grey and it represents the sustainer and caretaker of the world called Vishnu (75).

76-78. The letter 'M' has the natural quality called 'Tamsic'; its colour is dark and it stands for the annihilator Rudra. In this way, the origin of Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra is deemed to be in OM or 'Pranav' which is the cosmic symbol of the Divine.

OM is the transcendental, supreme and primary cause for the origin of all that exists. The creator of the world, Brahma, is deemed to be incorporated and included as an integral part of the letter 'A' (i.e., the letter represents Brahma), Vishnu in the letter 'U' (76-77),---

---and Rudra (Shiva) in the letter 'M'. It is only Pranav/OM that keeps shining brightly and brilliantly everywhere (or it remains visible, manifested or revealed in all its glory and splendour at all the places in its myriad forms) in the cosmos.

This Pranav/OM is said to be facing upwards (i.e., it is uplifting by nature) in wise, erudite, sagacious, adroit and enlightened persons, while it faces down (i.e., is degrading, degenerating and denigrating) in stupid and ignorant people (78).

79. It is Pranav/OM that is present everywhere, in every direction in equal intensity and magnitude; it is immanent and omnipresent. A person who realises or understands this as it is, is indeed an adroit person who is an expert in the essential knowledge, tenets and teachings of the Vedas. Amongst enlightened and wise seekers/aspirants, this Pranav/OM is irrevocably, un-hinderingly, consistently and uniformly uplifting for their souls. [See also verse no. 85-88 below.] (79) [75-79]

80. The 'Naad' (i.e., the cosmic background sound in the universe) is a subtle, sublime, constant, consistent, persistent, infinite, un-breaking, un-pausing cosmic sound or vibration which produces the sound equivalent to the audible sound produced by saying the word 'OM' (and it is also known as Pranav). It is a reverberating, resounding and echoing deep and grave sound with a heavy resonating bass which lasts for a long time like the striking of a gong or a large bell, and it comes in a steady, continuous stream of wavelike oscillating vibrations like the waves of a sea or the continuous, uninterrupted flow of oil. [The oil flow forms a tenacious string like treacle from one end to another.] The root or origin of this 'Naad' is what is known as Brahm; i.e., it has its origin in Brahm; it is Brahm which produces and radiates this sound (80).

81. The root or the fount from where this OM/Pranav has originated is understandable and realisable only by great and exalted persons who have a penetrating, sharp, intelligent, focused and discriminatory intellect. It is illuminated, radiant, brilliant and splendours, and is beyond the realm of speech (i.e., the speech does not have the ability to describe it). The great, wise and exalted person who has knowledge of this fact is indeed an expert in the essential teachings and tenets of the Vedas (81).

[Note—The concept of OM and NAAD is explained separately in an ebook that can be freely downloaded from my website:

< www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com >]

82. The 'Hans' (literally a divine Swan) resides gloriously and majestically in the center of the 2 eyes of a creature during the waking state of consciousness. The letter 'Sa' of the Sanskrit alphabet represents the 'Khechhari Mudra' of the Yogi (see verse nos. 52-56) which is certainly the personification or the image of the word 'Twam' (82).

83-83. The letter 'Ha' represents the supreme Lord of creation, called 'Parmeshwar' which is certainly symbolised or represented by the word 'Tat'.

[That is, the two syllables of the word 'Hans', meaning the divine swan, are 'Han' and 'Sa' which stand for the two words of metaphysics which have profound impact—the 2nd word is 'Twam' and the 1st is 'Tat' corresponding to these two syllables respectively. See note below.]

Any person who concentrates his mind and attention, and contemplates and meditates upon the letter 'Sa' shall surely become akin to, or equivalent to the form or the image represented by the letter 'Ha'. This is called contemplating upon and practicing of the twin tenets of 'So-a-ham' and 'Tattwa-masi' (83-83).

[Note:-The Upanishadic sage establishes uniformity and oneness with the two great philosophies and metaphysical concepts of the scriptures— 'So-a-ham' which means 'that is me', and 'Tattwa-masi' which means 'the essence is pure consciousness and it is me'. The word 'that' refers to Brahm which is the universal and absolute Truth and Reality about the existence, and has the qualities, inter alia, of enlightenment, of being eternal, omnipotent, universal, omnipresent, immanent, omniscient etc.. When the seeker/aspirant focuses his attention on the self represented by the letter 'Sa' (self) and the 'Khechhari Mudra' (when he is unconscious of the external world and focuses his attention on the glorious supreme entity present in the center of his eyebrows as described in previous verses pertaining to this Mudra), he realises the truth of the maxim 'So-a-ham'. When he opens his eyes of wisdom, the truth of the 2nd tenet 'Tattwa-masi' dawns on him. Put simply, it means that the creature realises that 'he is the same as the supreme Brahm who resides in his Atma/soul present in his bosom/heart'. At the same time, 'the external world seen through this eye of wisdom symbolised by the presence of the divine swan in his eyes is the same Brahm who has revealed

himself in this multifarious, diverse and myriad world'. This is the essential truth, or 'Tattwa'. See also note to verse no. 31-32 above.]

84. The sense organs (of perception and action as well as the mind as distinguished from the intellect) of a creature tie it in fetters, but these fetters cannot tie the Atma. As long as there is the sense of belonging, longing and attachment (known as 'having Mamta'), there is the existence of an entity called 'a creature', but as soon as the shackling effect of these are removed, the entity called 'a creature' ceases to exist and have any relevance for the Atma. Consequentially, only the 'Kaivalya' form (i.e., the only one, matchless, unique, un-paralleled and truthful state, that is the non-dual entity called the Atma, remains) (84).

85. The 3 Gods, viz, Moon, Sun and Fire, as well as the 3 mythological worlds represented by the words 'Bhu' (terrestrial), 'Bhuvaha' (the world between the earth and the upper layers of the atmosphere and the solar system), and 'Swaha' (the heavens), are deemed to be present in the 3 letters (A, U, M) of the divine cosmic word representing 'Pranav', that is OM, which is a stupendous and splendid, most brilliant and bright entity in the cosmos [See also verse nos. 74-79 above.] (85)

86. In the 3 letters of the word OM are inherently present all the actions and deeds, all the desires, aspirations and wishes, and all the knowledge, erudition, wisdom and enlightenment, as well as all the 3 cosmic energies¹ present in creation, called 'Brahmi', 'Raudri' and 'Vaishnavi'. [That is, the 3 letters of the word OM stand for creation, sustenance and annihilation respectively.] (86)

[Note :- ¹The 3 cosmic energies referred here pertain to the 3 forms that the supreme Brahman had taken for the purpose of creation. 'Brahmi' is the energy with which Brahman creates, and its relevant subtle counterpart here is the power to wish and aspire for and expect something. 'Rudrani' is the cosmic energy by which Shiva/Rudra ends this creation, or brings to a conclusion the creation which Brahman had made possible. 'Vaishnavi' is the cosmic energy by which Vishnu sustains and nourishes the creation, and its subtle counterpart is taking actions and doing deeds because without actions and deeds, the creation cannot be sustained. For all these activities —creation, sustenance and conclusion, knowledge, wisdom and intelligence are needed because success in any of these requires the requisite expertise and the ability to use and apply it judiciously.

In other words, Brahman makes this creation possible by wishing to do so in his mind. If the creation is righteous and virtuous, it is sustained and nourished by Vishnu, but if it goes wayward and starts committing evil and sins, Rudra takes charge and uses his energy called 'Rudrani' to destroy that evil part of the creation. Extending this logic further, we deduce that when the evil tendencies in the world will almost eclipse or outweigh the good qualities, Rudra would completely annihilate the creation, but the remnants

of good elements left behind will help Brahma to re-start the cycle of creation once again.]

87. One should assiduously, constantly and persistently repeat/chant it (OM) using his voice and divert all the efforts of the body towards it (such as doing righteous deeds selflessly, doing Tapa, which means penance, austerity and keeping of rigid and religious vows as well as sufferance, doing meditation, following the sacraments, and such like). By doing sincere Japa (repetition) of the divine Mantra OM in his heart, a person should be firmly established in the illuminated, brilliant, bright and splendorous OM which is a symbol or representative of the supreme and transcendental entity called Brahm (87).

88. A person who constantly repeats the divine word OM in any state he lives, whether he has duly prepared himself, is purified and cleansed and ready for doing it or not, such a person will not fall in the trap of sins and get caught in its accruing fetters. He remains in this world like the petals of a lotus flower which are not affected by the surrounding water (because the water does not stick to them). [That is, such a seeker/aspirant remains aloof from the dirty world around it, and in spite of his living in it, he does so like the lotus flower which remains spotless and dry in spite of its habitat in dirty water of a lake or a pond.] (88)

89. [The Upanishadic says goes back to the topic of ‘Pranayam’ which he had described earlier in verse nos. 40-42, 63-64 and 95-108.]

As long as the vital winds continue to move in the body, the ‘Bindu’ (the vital energy of the body responsible for making life possible—see verse nos. 59-64) also remains unstable and uncontrolled. When the winds calm down, there is stability and calmness in the Yogi. That is why, a wise ascetic should practice control over the vital winds/airs, a process called ‘Pranayam’ (89).

90. As long as the vital winds/airs are present in the body, the creature is said to be ‘alive’ (or living inside the body, or a body having life). ‘Death’ is defined as the escape of the vital wind/air from the body (i.e., as soon as the vital winds leave the body, the creature is said to be dead). That is why the vital winds should be controlled and harnessed (in a process known as ‘Pranayam’) (90).

91. The creature or Jiva cannot abandon the body as long as the vital winds/airs are trapped in it¹. Any person who keeps his sight focused at a point in the middle of the eyebrows² (see verse nos. 52 and 106) is able to virtually vanquish death. What has he to fear from ‘Kaal’ (death)? [See also verse nos. 52-53 in this context.] (91)

[Note:- ¹The creature is synonymous with the Atma or soul which is the only ‘active and living’ factor inside the body. The soul is the only conscious factor called ‘life’ inside the otherwise gross, lifeless and inert body. This

‘lifeless puppet’ (body) is made to jump or move around from place to place by the force of the wind present inside it much like the balloon or football. Another example is the tail of a lizard which jumps and hops around when it is detached from the main body of the lizard. This jumping and hopping around gives the impression that the severed tail has a life of its own in it, but it is not so.

²The tri-junction consisting of the middle point of the eyebrows and the root of the nose is the site of the so-called ‘third eye’ or the eye of wisdom, and it is also the site of the ‘Agya Chakra’.]

92. Even Brahma, the creator, does the exercise called ‘Pranayam’ to get freedom from the eternal fear of death (or the fear from having a short life span which will come to an end sooner or later). Therefore, in order to restraint the ‘Pran’ (literally the life giving vital wind which is superior to the other winds) from escaping from the body, Yogis should practice the exercise called ‘Pranayam’ (92).

93. ‘Pran’ (the life factor) is like a ‘Hans’ (a divine Swan) which comes out for a distance of 26 fingers from the nostrils astride the exhaled breath. Therefore, ‘Pranayam’ should be done through both the nostrils, the left and the right (93).

94. When all the nerves/veins and their various ‘Chakras’ (subtle energy centers of the body) are purged of all impurities/toxins, the Yogi (ascetic) becomes capable of restraining, controlling and harnessing the ‘Pran’ (94).

[Note:- (i) Purification of the nerves is described in verse nos. 65-70. (ii) The various ‘Chakras’ are described in verse nos. 6-13. (iii) The important nerves and their location are described in verse nos. 14-21. (iv) The various vital winds and their patron Gods are described in verse nos. 22-30.]

95. [The process of doing ‘Pranayam’ is being described once again. The reader is advised to see verse nos. 40-42, 63-64 and 89-94 also.] To practice ‘Pranayam’ Yoga, a yogi should sit in a ‘Padmasan’ posture (see verse nos. 40 and 71). The wind should be slowly inhaled through the ‘Chandra Naadi’ (see verse nos. 65 and 67) situated in the left nostril —this process of inhaling wind through the left nostril is known as ‘Purak’ (completing or filling anything. Here the inhaled breath fills the inside of the body).

The inhaled wind should be retained in the lungs for some time, as long as possible—it is a process known as ‘Kumbhak’. After that, it should be purged or purified by way of excretion or exhalation through the ‘Surya Naadi’ located in the right nostril¹ (95).

[Note :- ¹Put simply, the fresh air should be inhaled through the left nostril first, retained inside the body for some time to enable the tissues of the body to absorb oxygen brought in by this fresh air and give up carbon-dioxide and other impure gases. This waste-laden air is then exhaled through the right

nostril like the exhaust chimney of a factory or the exhaust pipe of an engine. See also verse no. 98 below.]

96. During the process of doing 'Pranayam', the aspirant/seeker finds happiness, bliss and tranquillity by focusing his attention on an image of a full, milky white, luminescent and brightly shining Moon emerging from an ocean of Amrit, which is the nectar or ambrosia or elixir of life and eternity as well as of bliss and happiness (96).

97. Again, the seeker/aspirant finds happiness, bliss and tranquillity by focusing his attention on the image of a splendorous, radiant, glorious, flaming and brilliant image of the Sun (known as "Aditya") present in his heart (bosom) while doing the exercise of 'Pranayam'.

[This imagination of the hot sun symbolises the fact that the cool air, which was previously inhaled by him through the left nostril and which has been held in his lungs, is gradually getting hot due to the body heat and impurities present inside the body. The visualisation of the sun is metaphor for the great furnace present inside a factory or the heat produced by a running engine symbolised by the metabolic activities perpetually going on inside the body.] (97)

98. During the process of doing 'Pranayam', the aspirant should first inhale breath through the Eda Naadi situated in the left nostril. After that, the breath should be exhaled (literally, pushed out, purged, fully purifying and cleaning the inside of the body) through the Pingla Naadi situated in the right nostril. While doing so, the moon and the sun should be visualised as described earlier (in verse nos. 96 and 97 respectively). Constant practice with diligence helps in purifying these two nerves and purging them of all their impurities and removing all the impediments in their proper functioning in a short time period of merely 2 months. [See also verse nos. 65, 67 and 95.] (98)

99. The benefits of 'Naadi Shodhan' (i.e. the 'nerve purifying/cleaning/vitalising') process of Pranayam is that it empowers the seeker/aspirant to sufficiently hold the vital winds at his will, provides him with good health, keeps the digestive organs functioning properly, and also enables him to hear the cosmic sound called the 'Naad' (99).

100. During the exercise of holding the vital wind called 'Pran' (meaning the freshly inhaled breath) inside the body in the lungs, the seeker/aspirant should also endeavour to withhold the 'Apan' wind (i.e., the wind passing downwards in the intestine) from escaping down through the anus. In this way, both the winds (Pran and Apan) coalesce and mix with each other and rise upwards towards the sky¹ (100).

[Note:-¹When the breath is finally exhaled, it contains the impurities present in the body in an atomic or microscopic dust-like form such as gases, toxic

particles etc. present in the whole system of the body, and it will be spewed out through the right nostril like a chimney in a factory or an exhaust pipe of a vehicle. When this exhalation process is stopped for a while along with the stopping of the passage of the flatus downwards and out of the anus, the 2 winds get trapped inside the body and get mixed with each other. The heat of the body warms the two airs. As is well known, hot air rises up while cold air goes down. The sage here means that by doing 'Pranayam' all the impurities present in all the corners of the body will be scooped out or sucked out by the hot air as it rises up and is finally exhaled through the right nostril with the force of hot air escaping from a punctured hole of a balloon or the mouth of a chimney, dragging along with it all the impurities which fall in its path.]

101. [The 3 stages or phases or steps of 'Pranayam' are named here—] The 3 stages or steps undertaken during the process of 'Pranayam' are called— (i) 'Purak' (literally meaning filling, completing, complementing; here it means to fully inhale the breath till the time the lungs and the abdomen cannot take anymore of it), (ii) 'Kumbhak' (literally meaning to put in a pitcher and close the lid; here meaning holding the inhaled air inside the body), and (iii) 'Rechak' (literally meaning to purge, purify, expel, excrete; here meaning the exhalation of the impurity-laden breath) respectively. These three steps are an image of or they are akin to and synonymous with the divine word OM having the 3 subtle letters (A, U, M). [Each of these letters stands for one step of Pranayam.]

At the same time, the seeker/aspirant should contemplate upon the Mantras (such as OM or Ram or any other divine group of subtle or sublime divine letters) having 12 Maatras'¹ (101).

[Note:- 'The word *Maatra* means 'magnitude, volume, intensity, amount, quantity, dose, ingredient'. It also means, 'half syllables or the vowel sounds appended to the consonants of the Hindi/Sanskrit alphabets in order to form meaningful sounds representing words. Here, this word refers to the number of times a particular Mantra, e.g., OM, should be silently repeated before a particular phase or stage or step of Pranayam is completed. So, the '12 Maatra Mantra' used during Pranayam refers to the time that is to be taken to do a particular phase of Pranayam which will be governed by the time taken to repeat a particular Mantra for a prescribed number of times. Here, OM should be repeated 12 times. It is to determine the pause or the time needed to do a particular phase of the Pranayam exercise. It acts like a 'stop watch' to decide the time factor needed for a particular phase of Pranayam.]

102. This 'Pranayam' practice accompanied by 'Mantras' and their 12 'Maatras' offered in honour of the Sun and the Moon-Gods has the potential to destroy the net of all the faults, flaws, shortcomings, blemishes and defects of the Yogi, and provide him with liberation and deliverance from this net-like entrapping world (102).

103. This is known as 'OM Pranayam' (Pranayam done with the use of the divine word OM and contemplating upon this Mantra). It is done with 12 'Maatras' during the 'Purak' phase (i.e., the inhalation phase), with 16 'Maatras' during the 'Kumbhak' stage (i.e., when the wind is retained inside the body), and with 10 'Maatras' during the 'Rechak' phase (i.e., during exhalation) (103).

104. The 'Pranayam' done with 12 'Maatras' is considered to be of an ordinary, routine or mediocre standard, with twice the number of Maatras (i.e., having 24 Maatras) as of a medium standard, and with thrice the number of Maatras (i.e., having 36 Maatras) as of the best standard (104).

105. The mediocre, routine and ordinary 'Pranayam' brings out sweat (see also verse no. 41 in this context), the medium type of Pranayam produces a shaking, shivering and trembling sensation in the body, while in the best type of Pranayam the body levitates from the ground (i.e., it lifts off due to it being made lighter by the effects of wind forces moving upwards much like a balloon being lifted upwards by hot air in it). Hence, one should do this last type of Pranayam (the wind holding exercise wherein the Pran and Apaana winds are mixed and warmed inside the body, enabling them to lift it up) (105).

[Note :- (i) The word used for the ordinary or routine form of Pranayam is 'Adham', which literally means the most lowly, humble, meek and basic type of Pranayam. So it is the minimum that has to be done for a wind harnessing exercise to make it qualified as a Pranayam. (ii) The breaking out of sweat is a common phenomenon where there is any physical exertion. But verse no. 41 prescribes that it should be rubbed back in the skin instead of being wiped and swabbed with a cloth. (iii) The levitation of the body is akin to a process by which hot air balloon rises up in the air carrying a payload attached to it at the bottom. The heat generated in the body of the Yogi when he does Pranayam exercises heats the vital winds present inside the body, making the body lighter than air and it gradually levitates. Refer also to Trishikhi Brahmano-panishad, verse no. 2/104-105 of Shukla Yajur Veda.]

106. For the purpose of practicing Yoga, the aspirant should sit in a lonely and secluded place in a 'closed Padmasana' posture (see verse no. 40). He should mentally bow before his Guru (moral teacher and guide in doing Pranayam exercise) who represents Lord Shiva (who is the most auspicious, erudite, wise and enlightened of the Trinity Gods, is regarded as the patron God of Yogis or those who do meditation and Yoga exercises), focus his attention on the tip of his nose (see verse nos. 52 and 91 also), and then practice Pranayam (106).

107. One should stop or close the 9 openings or apertures called doors¹ in the body to prevent the vital winds from escaping. The Apaana wind (passing

down in the intestine) should be heated with the fire of Yoga and made active (or energised). Then after adopting a Yogic posture which has ignited the fire and activated the wind (i.e., the Vahini Yoga² as described in note below and earlier in verse no. 38), the Yogi should push that wind through the 'Kundalini' route up into the mind while concentrating his attention on the pure consciousness called Atma. As long as this wind (as afore mentioned) remains established in the head, the Yogi does not want the company of another great person or another Yogi. That is, he feels so elevated, ecstatic and blissful that he does not feel the need to have the company of another Yogi who could disturb him and disrupt his blissful state. It also means that once he is successful in activating the 'Kundalini' and pushing up the vital air along its path into the head, no further guidance is required by him (107).

[Note :- ¹The 9 doors are the various openings in the body such as 2 ears, 2 eyes, 2 nostrils, 1 mouth, 1 anus and 1 urethra = 9.

²The *Vahini Yog* referred to here in verse no. 107 as well as earlier in verse no. 38 deals with the activation of the vital wind/air with the fire/energy of life. For it, various techniques, processes, postures and exercises have been prescribed in Yoga, the chief among them being the activation of the Kundalini by Pranayam. The 'fire' required to heat and activate the 'Apan' wind and push it upwards comes from the 'Sun Chakra' or the 'Surya Chakra' located in the region of the navel. It is done by 'Surya Pranayam'. During this meditative practice, it is imagined that leaping flames are flaring up from the core of the sun symbolically residing in the navel of the Yogi, and these flames are virtually heating the Sushumna nerve (also called the pathway leading to Brahm) as well as the other vital winds present in the lungs, the heart, throat etc. By heating the lower end of the Sushumna nerve, which is akin to heating one end of a heating rod or coil, alongside the heating of the Kundalini and the Apan wind, the opening of this Sushumna nerve, which was up till now blocked, is unclogged and the subtle energy of the coiled Kundalini, which was hereto before trapped inside it, is released and pushed up by the Apan wind into the spinal cord through this Sushumna nerve where it rises up through this channel right up to the mind or the top of the head, mixing with it all other winds en-route, collecting all their impurities with it, much like the hot air above the surface of the earth developing into whirlwind and rising up into the atmosphere, taking up along with it the dust particles, dry leaves, twigs etc. as it goes up. This polluted wind is finally exhaled through the right and left nostrils as described in verse no. 95 and 98 of this Upanishad. The rising of the Kundalini is similar to the rising of heated mercury in a thermometer. When the bulb is heated, the mercury shoots up. Here, when the Kundalini is heated, the energy trapped inside it rises up the Sushumna nerve.]

108. For the purpose of crossing this ocean-like world of transmigration, this Pranayam is like a great bridge, and it is like the fire which burns and exhausts all the sins of a Yogi as if they were its fuel—this is what erudite and wise Yogis always assert and proclaim (108).

109. Amongst the various benefits of Yoga, some are the following —the diseases afflicting the body are eliminated by doing various ‘Aasans’ or the various postures adopted during Yoga and meditation, the sins are destroyed by doing Pranayam, and the various mental ailments, diseases and other forms of bodily torments and troubles of the Yogi are ended by observing self-restraint of the sense organs, called ‘Pratyahar’. [See also verse no. 69, 108, 116 and 117.] (109)

110. The various meditative practices which teach self restraint, discipline and control as well as concentration, firmness and perseverance of the mind help in making it steady, unwavering, strong, firm, resolute, focused, courageous, patient and brave in its beliefs, convictions and faiths as well as in being fortitudinous, equanimous and tolerant (i.e., having Dharna). As a result, the pure and majestic consciousness is aroused and brought to the fore.

The process of ‘Samadhi’ (a trance-like state described below in verse no. 112) provides ‘Moksha’ (emancipation and salvation) and helps in getting rid of both the good as well as the evil deeds of the Yogi and their accruing results (i.e., the rewards and punishments of the various deeds done and actions taken by the Yogi) (110).

111. The stage or state of ‘Pratyahar’ (pronounced as “Pratyaahaar”; meaning self restraint of the sense organs)¹ is achieved by doing the ‘Pranayam’ exercise 12 times. By undertaking ‘Pratyahar’ exercise 12 times, the Yogi achieves success in attaining the state called ‘Shubh Dharna’ (having auspicious and welfare providing Dharna as described in verse no. 110). It entails putting a leash or restraint upon the mind, and focus it or concentrate it on any one thing (111).

[Note:- ¹The concept of *Pratyahar* has also been dealt with in verse nos. 109 and 120.]

112. Similarly, by the practicing of ‘Dharna’ (pronounced as “Dhaarnaa”) 12 times, the Yogi achieves ‘Dhyan’ (which means success in being able to steadily focus the mind-intellect on the pure conscious Atma, which is the pure-self). Finally, when Dhyan has been successfully practiced for 12 consecutive times, the final stage of ‘Samadhi’ is obtained¹. This is the view of those who are expert in doing Yoga (112).

[Note—¹The basic steps in doing *Samadhi* according to this verse are the following—doing *Pranayam* followed by *Pratyahar*, *Dharna* and *Dhyan*, which leads to ‘Samadhi’.

The term ‘times’ used in the text is indicative of the number of times Pranayam exercise is done before a Yogi is able to achieve, first, the control over his sense organs (Pratyahar), then second, to be able to steady his mind (Dharna), and then thirdly to be able to concentrate it by contemplation and meditation upon the Atma, Brahm or Pranav, and finally and fourthly, to be

able to attain the final state of tranquility and bliss obtained in Samadhi. So the total number of sessions of Pranayam exercises needed to be done by him to achieve the state of Samadhi = $12 \times 12 \times 12 \times 12 = 20736$ sessions in all, which is definitely not a joke! In other words, a person who is in a state of Samadhi is deemed to be doing Pranayam perpetually. He is supposed to have achieved successes in self control of the sense organs and the mind.]

113. During the state of 'Samadhi' (pronounced as "Samaadhi"), the aspirant loses his narrow minded identity, becomes broad minded and enlightened, brilliant like a divine light, and becomes one with the infinite cosmos.

[That is, there is no notion of duality or segregation between the seeker and the cosmos anymore once the state of 'Samadhi' is achieved. He becomes one and uniform with the vast cosmos.]

When this ultimate state is achieved, there is nothing more that is left to be observed, witnessed or literally 'seen'; no deeds or action of the man can shackle him to this world of transmigration anymore (113).

114. [The process to do 'Samadhi' is now being described—] The Yogi should firmly sit in a posture so that the heels of both the legs join each other and press the anus from downwards. Then the eyes, ears and nose should be closed with the tips of the fingers of the hand. The breath (literally the air) should be drawn in through the mouth. Then the 'Apan' wind passing downwards (in the intestines) should be reverted and diverted upwards. Then both the winds (i.e., the 'Apan' and 'Pran') should be concentrated in the region of the heart (chest). This mixed wind should then be allowed to rise up to the head and remain there. Then the attention of the mind should be concentrated/focused upon it. By this process, Yogis attain a special state of having 'equilibrium' with, or having uniformity with the vast cosmos present outside the body) (114).

115. When both the winds moving up (i.e., breath, the Pran wind) and down (in the intestine, the Apan wind) are concentrated and localised in the area called the 'sky' (represented by the top of the head), the seeker begins to hear a great sound. This sublime and divine sound is like the ringing of large bells or the playing of musical instruments. When this happens, it is said that the Yogi has achieved expertise in hearing the cosmic vibrations known as 'Naad' (115).

116. By practicing 'Pranayam' in a systematic and prescribed way (format), one attains freedom from all the diseases and ailments. On the contrary, this body becomes a breeding ground for various diseases if 'Pranayam' is either not practiced or practiced in a wrong way. [See also verse nos. 69, 108-109.] (116)

117. When the vital winds gets polluted or misbalanced inside the body, various diseases and ailments related to them—such as cough, asthma and hiccup as well as those of the head, ears, eyes etc.—are produced (117).

118. Just like wild and cruel animals such as elephants, lions, tigers etc. are tamed gradually using diligence and patience; the vital airs/winds should also be tamed, controlled and harnessed by gradual practice done with patience. If a seeker/aspirant cannot do it, he is ruined/killed/destroyed (i.e., he has to suffer a lot and consequentially all his endeavours not only fail but prove ruinous for him)¹ (118).

[Note:- ¹Yogic exercise are as stupendously beneficial as they are deadly and dangerous for a practioner if they are not handled carefully under expert guidance. Mere reading of books without practical help is very fatal even as trying to play fools with a lion or tiger in a cage invites sure death. Here the vital winds are a metaphor for the tiger or the lion, and not properly handling them is like playing fools with the animals.]

119. The ‘Pran’ (breath or the vital air sustaining life) should be properly and systematically inhaled, retained and exhaled (this process has been described in detail at the beginning of this Upanishad in verse nos. 98-101). It is only than that they will be of any benefit for the aspirant Yogi, giving him success and accomplishment in his endeavour (119).

120. The various sense organs such as the eyes, nose etc. have a natural and inherent tendency to run behind or pursue their respective objects, and then enjoy them. To stop them from this (and instead diverting their efforts and energy towards spiritual pursuits) is called ‘Pratyaahar’ (see also verse nos. 109, 111) (120).

121. Even as a sun withdraws its brilliant light as the evening progresses, and it finally, completely absorbs the light into itself (creating the darkness of night), the Yogi should also gradually enhance his achievements and success in the path of Yoga, withdraw himself from the external world and finally eliminate all his faults, blemishes, shortcomings, defects and misconceptions of his mind and heart. This stage is the 3rd stage of Yoga called ‘Tritiyaang Samadhi’, and the Yogi becomes firmly established in it. [This 3rd stage, in the Vedantic terminology, is the deep sleep state of consciousness.

This verily is the knowledge as propounded by this Yog-Chudaamani Upanishad (121).

(II—B)Yograj Upanishad

As the name suggests, it is also a ‘king’ amongst Upanishads dealing with the topic of Yoga. It is brief and precise, and has only 21 verses in all. It outlines the 9 Chakras, which are the subtle whirling energy centers present in the body, and describes their location, shape and importance. It complements the Yog Chudamani Upanishad. The great forefather of Yoga, Patanjali, has expounded elaborately upon the various aspects of Yoga.

1. Now the 4 types of great Yoga exercises which enable a Yogi (ascetic) to achieve success in obtaining expertise in the science of Yoga and his endeavour to successfully master them are enumerated and elucidated below. These 4 types of exercises are the following—(i) ‘Mantra Yog’, (ii) ‘Laye Yog’, (iii) ‘Raj Yog’, and (vi) ‘Hath Yog’. These are regarded as the ‘king of Yogic exercises’ (1).

2. Those who understand the essential components of Yoga and are expert exponents in its technique, art and science expound that Yoga has 4 basic stages—(i) ‘Aasan’ (sitting posture), (ii) ‘Pransangrodhan’ (the control of the vital winds), (iii) ‘Dhyan’ (contemplation and meditation, concentration and focusing of the mind and intellect on any topic or point), and (iv) ‘Samadhi’ (a trance-like state obtained in higher states of Yoga when the aspirant loses awareness of the external world and becomes so focused that he almost dissolves his identity with the supreme identity of the cosmos, resulting in his getting internal bliss and happiness that is virtually perpetual). (2)

3. These 4 stages (of verse no. 2) apply universally to all forms of Yoga. Wise ones should do ‘Japa’ i.e., repetition of divine Mantras or holy words or syllables pertaining to the trinity Gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, while doing Yogic practices (3).

4. Amongst those who had attained ‘Siddhi’ (expertise, accomplishment, success in mastering the technique, skill, art, craft and science of doing Yoga, and thereby getting empowered by mystical powers) in the realm of ‘Mantra Yog’ (performance of Yoga by repetition of Mantras and using them as a medium in focusing their mind on the divine principal) are Yogis such as Vatsaraj etc., while ‘Laye Yog’ (meaning dissolution of the individual self with the transcendental, supreme, sublime, omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent cosmic Self, and thereby eliminating the distinction between the self and the world; the philosophy of Vedanta) has been mastered by sages such as ‘Kirshna Dwepaayan’, commonly known as the legendary sage Veda Vyas (who had classified and coded the text of the Vedas into five sections, viz. the Rig/k Veda, the Sam Veda, the Shyukla Yajur Veda, the Krishna Yajur Veda, and the Atharva Veda, and segregated the Upanishads from the

main body of the Vedic text and classified them according to the Veda they belong to) (4).

5. The great and exalted souls attain success in Yoga by coalescing, merging or dissolving all the 9 'Chakras' (the subtle whirling energy centers present in the body) into one another.

The 1st Chakra is called 'Brahm Chakra'. It has 3 sheaths surrounding (enclosing or enveloping) it, and it has the shape of a 'Bhag' (literally, shaped like the female reproductive organ) (5).

6. The 'Mool Kand' is an image or an embodiment of 'Kaam' (passion, lust, desires); it personifies 'Kaam', and is located at the site of the 'Apan wind' (the wind that passes down the intestine and rectum). [This Kand is present at a point just above the opening point of the anus in the lower end of the abdomen.] It is also known as 'Vahin-Kand' (the fire pit) or 'Tattwa Kundalini' (the hot coil-like basic and essential subtle energy center of the body located at the base or pit of the spine) (6).

7. That 'Mool Kand' should be contemplated upon as being an embodiment of brilliant light as well as the creature itself, because the creation process starts here. This contemplation or concentration or meditation of the mind should have 'Mukti' (liberation and deliverance) as its prime aim and objective.

Experts have said that in the middle of it is located the second 'Chakra' called the 'Swadhisthan Chakra' (7).

8. There is a deified male phallus called 'Linga' facing towards the west and the colour of a sprout which is pink or red. It has a brilliant radiance and a glowing halo around it. [That is, this 'Ling' is like a fresh red carrot and it represents the deified supreme Male aspect of creation.]

The site is called 'Udriyan Peeth' (the word 'Peeth' means a seat, temple, an abode, a location or platform). The aspirant Yogi should attract the world, i.e., the creative powers that give rise to the world, and focus them at this spot (8).

[Note :- (i) Verse no. 5 talks about the female reproductive organs, while verse no. 8 is about the male organ. (ii) The 2nd Chakra, Swadhisthan, is located at the site of Udriyan Peeth, and the 'red sprout' emerges from it much like the sprout from a germinating seed. The erect tip of this sprout is the symbolic deified male phallus.]

9. The 3rd Chakra called 'Naabhi Chakra' (literally meaning that subtle energy center present in the area of the abdomen where the navel is located). It is said that the world has its foundation there; it is established inside it¹. The aspirant Yogi should imagine/visualise/think/contemplation/meditate that there is a source of great subtle power of electric energy having 5 subtle coverings or sheaths enveloping it (much like the covering of a high energy

domestic electric wire or cable) situated in the middle of the 'Naabhi Chakra' (9).

[Note :- ¹Medically this is true because the foetus gets its nourishment from the mother through the umbilical cord attached to the navel. This cord is clipped after birth of the child to separate it from the mother. This is why the navel has been described as the seat where the whole world is symbolically located, because it is from this navel that the embryo gets its nourishment through the umbilical cord from its mother. The existence of the world is due to the nourishment that the embryo gets through this novel apparatus from its mother, and it is the point by which it is attached to its parent with the help of the umbilical cord. Symbolically, by extension, it means that it is this 'Naabhi Chakra' which links the individual creature to its parent, the supreme cosmic Brahm. Further, the Sun is also said to be symbolically located in this region. The Sun is the primary source of heat, light and energy in our world. This also goes on to highlight the importance and significance of the navel subtle energy center called the Nabhi Chakra.]

10. Wise, erudite, sagacious, adroit and enlightened persons obtain all 'Siddhis' (see verse no. 2) by meditating and contemplating upon, by thinking about and by visualising it (the electric-like energy center as described in verse no. 9).

The 4th Chakra has its face or head pointed downwards and is located in the heart of the creature. It is called the 'Hridaya (Heart) Chakra'. One should be aware of this fact (10).

11. The seeker/aspirant should make efforts to visualise the presence of a bright, radiant, sublime, divine and illuminated 'Hans' (a divine Swan) in the center of it (i.e., in the heart). It is this divine Swan that has its face (beak and neck) facing downwards as described in verse no. 10 above. By contemplating and meditating upon it, the whole world is subordinated to the seeker/aspirant; it becomes controlled by him and becomes obedient to him.

[That is, a seeker/aspirant who concentrates upon this divine swan symbolically present in his heart is empowered with a divine authority that enables him to exercise command over the whole world; the whole world respects him, reveres and honours him). There is no doubt in it (11).

12. The 5th Chakra is called 'Kantha Chakra'. [The word 'Kantha' means the throat; hence, this subtle energy center is located in the throat.] To the left of it is the 'Eda nerve', to the right is the 'Pingla nerve' and in the center is the 'Sushumna nerve'. (12)

13. By contemplating and meditating upon this (Kantha Chakra) as having a pristine pure, auspicious, radiant and brilliant light, the seeker/aspirant successfully gets all 'Siddhis' (see verse no. 2).

The 6th Chakra is called 'Taluka Chakra'. [The word 'Talu' means the roof of the mouth, the palate.] This is also called the 'Ghantika-Sthan' (which is the location of the Adam's apple) (13).

14. It is also called the path to the 10th door leading to Brahm realisation (i.e. realisation of the 'supreme cosmic Consciousness'), and is also known as 'Rajdant' or the 'Royal Avenue' that leads to the Supreme Being. [Since "Brahm" is the cosmic supreme Consciousness, the path that leads the creature to this realisation is alike to an avenue that leads to the palace of the Emperor, the 'Royal Avenue'.]

By symbolically dissolving the mind by deep concentration, contemplation and meditation in the void or space of this place (which is the buccal cavity), a person can certainly achieve 'Mukti' (i.e. he can get liberation and deliverance from this mundane world consisting of worries as well as freeing his body from all the miseries and troubles it is subjected to in relation with its interaction with the world. This is because he now symbolically becomes a traveller of the great path leading to Brahm which symbolises the ultimate aim at which the creature should endeavour to reach in order to get freedom from this world. This is called emancipation and salvation) (14).

15. The 7th Chakra is the 'Bhru Chakra'. [The word 'Bhru' means the eyebrows. Hence, this 7th subtle energy center is located between the two eyebrows and just above the root of the nose.]

It is also known as 'Vidya' or 'Bindu Sthan' (literally, the site or point, a Bindu, of knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment. It is at this point that Lord Shiva has his 3rd eye of enlightenment. It is this point which is considered as the most important location in a person's brain which can lighten up the entire world for him. It is like the head-lamp worn by miners going inside the dark pit of a coal mine). Yogis (ascetic) meditate, contemplate and focus their attention upon it as a rounded center of unmatched dazzling, brilliant light located in the middle of the two eyebrows. By doing so, they attain emancipation and deliverance. (15)

16. The 8th Chakra is called 'Brahm-Randhra'¹. It is symbolic of the supreme and ultimate emancipation, deliverance and salvation that a creature aspires to achieve. It has the colour and configuration of a cloud or smoke. It is the place of origin (of wisdom and enlightenment pertaining to the knowledge of Brahm), and is called 'Sutika Gram' (literally, the native village—"Gram", of origin of the creature—"Sutika")². By contemplating and meditating upon it, the Yogi achieves deliverance and emancipation for himself (16).

[Note:-¹The word "Randhra" refers to the hair-like aperture that is present on the top of the skull and is believed to be the place through which the supreme Consciousness, the 'Brahm', had entered the body of the creature when the creation was first born. Refer: Aiteriya Upanishad of the Rig Veda, Canto 1, Section 3, verse no. 12.

²The phrase ‘native village’ or the ‘Sutika Gram’ is very significant in the context of the creature. A person leaves his native village in search of the world, searching for livelihood and knowledge. He may become a very renowned person, but his root lies in his native village. Similarly, the native place where a creature was born is the supreme Brahm, and the rest of the world in which it wanders is like the attempt of that villager who goes out into the wide world to make out a living for himself but his roots lie in his native village, which in the context of the Upanishads is Brahma

In verse no. 15, the 7th Chakra is known as the ‘Vidya Sthan’, or the place where wisdom and knowledge pertaining to the world is located. The difference between the two centers of knowledge and wisdom, the 7th Chakra and the 8th Chakra, the ‘Bhru Chkar’ and the ‘Brahm-Randhra Chakra’ respectively, is that the former gives worldly wisdom and the latter enlightens a person about Brahm. Both these complement each other. A person who is wise, never forgets about his humble roots originating in a non-descript small hamlet, notwithstanding the success and fame that he has acquired for himself after leaving his native place and stepping outside into the wide world. The allusion here is that a creature might become very enlightened and wise in all practical aspects of Yoga and the philosophy of Vedanta, but his true identity and his lineage lies with Brahm. He must not lose sight of this fact that Brahm is his ‘native village’, as it were.]

17. It (the Brahm-Randhra) is understood to be blue in colour (representing the ‘sky’ and its vastness), and it is the bestower of emancipation and salvation (because when the ascetic is able to focus his mind here he experiences the vastness of the sky as well as an indescribable sense of bliss that frees him of all bondages pertaining to his gross body and the gross world). It is also called the ‘Jaalandhar Peeth’ or seat. [This is because this site represents the cosmic ocean where the supreme Brahm, the supreme Consciousness resides in the cosmic ocean of bliss, beatitude and felicity.]

The 9th Chakra is called ‘Vyom Chakra’ (meaning the Sky Chakra). It has 16 petals like that of a lotus (17).

18. The supreme, transcendental, majestic and stupendous power that is trapped in the center of that 16-petal ‘Vyom Chakra’ (of verse no. 17) should be regarded as being synonymous with truthful knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, erudition and sense. By meditating and contemplating upon the ‘Purna Giri Peeth’ (literally, the summit of the mountain of wholesomeness, or the mountain of completeness, or the mountain where everything is present) having the ‘Shakti’ (the cosmic subtle energy, the stupendous potential powers of creation) enshrined in its core, the aspirant/seeker attains liberation, deliverance and emancipation (18).

[Note:- The ‘Vyom Chakra’ has 16 petals as described in verse no. 17 above. It is considered to be shaped like a mountain, which is conical in shape. The stupendous powers that knowledge and information bestows upon a person are present as a deified ‘Shakti’ (energy center) on this mountain. The word

‘mountain’ is a metaphor for a huge collection of something, a heap of treasures, a colossus, monumental entity, a huge monolith. So, all the auspicious knowledge present in the cosmos is heaped and concentrated here, as it were.]

19. The aspirant/seeker who contemplates and meditates upon these 9 Chakras in a progressive sequence one by one is blessed by attainment of ‘Mukti’ (liberation and deliverance) besides achieving success in all ‘Siddhis’ (mystical powers and success) as a routine matter in his daily day to day endeavours (19).

20. Those aspirants/seekers who have a divine, sublime and subtle vision of the rounded Chakra (the Vyom Chakra) resembling a knot or a tuft or a bunch of the ‘Kadamba tree’ (the tree called *Neculea Cadamba*), having two tassels or masts or staffs in its center, with the help of their subtle 3rd eye of wisdom, knowledge, erudition, discrimination and enlightenment—such aspirants/seekers attain the abode of Brahm (20).

21. Supreme bliss and joy, beatitude and felicity are obtained by conquering and subduing the ‘Upper Shakti Centers’ (i.e., the subtle energy centers referred to here are the ones which are located in the upper part of the body from throat upwards) by constricting and pressing the ‘Lower Shakti Centers’ (i.e., those energy centers located in the lower part of the body from navel downwards), and by activating the ‘Middle Shakti Centers’ (referring to the Chakras present in the middle part of the body, such as those located in the navel, the heart and the throat). This is an irrefutable fact and it is the truth (21).

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(II—C) Jabal Darshan Upanishad

This is also called ‘Darshano-panishad’ or the Upanishad based on the eclectic philosophy as propounded by the great ancient sage named Jabal (or “Jaabaaal”) that pertains to the doctrines of Yoga. It is a dialogue-cum-discourse between Lord Dattatreya, regarded as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and his disciple Sankriti. In it, the former describes the various aspects of Yoga, both in its philosophical, esoteric and mystical terms as well as the physical exercises it involves. It has 10 cantos.

The 1st canto deals with the 8 branches of Yoga and describes the 10 ‘Yams’ or self-restraints that are necessary for success in it. The 2nd canto

lists the 10 ‘Niyams’ or disciplines or principles or tenets that a seeker/aspirant is expected to follow in his day to day life. Even a cursory reading of these two cantos will highlight the fact that they have much in common with the basic tenets of Buddhism, Jainism and Christianity. An elaborate note has been added at the end of canto 2 to this effect.

Cantos 3-10 deal with the various facets of physical Yoga. cnto 3 tells us the various ‘Aasans’ or sitting postures adopted during meditation, canto 4 introduces us to the various nerves in the body, and it’s a remarkable canto because it describes also the vital winds, their functions and locations, the patron Gods of the Naadis, the importance of the body as a symbolic pilgrim site, thereby establishing that purity of the inside of a man is of paramount importance and nothing is got by wandering in external cities of pilgrimage.

Canto 5 describes the way to cleanse or detoxify or de-clog these nerves, canto 6 deals with the method and importance of ‘Pranayam’ or breath control, canto 7 highlights ‘Pratyahar’ or self-restraint in its various hues, cantos 8 and 9 are dedicated to ‘Dhaarana’ or conviction and firm belief in anything as well as ‘Dhyan’ or contemplation and focusing of the mind.

Finally, canto 10 describes what is known as ‘Samadhi’ or a trance like state of ultimate bliss. Taken all in all, this Upanishad combines philosophy and spiritualism with mysticism and practical guidance for a good life, good living and good health.

Canto 1

1. The 4-armed Lord Vishnu, the sustainer of all the creatures of this mortal world, manifested himself as an exalted ascetic name Dattatreya. The latter is an uncrowned king in the realm of Yoga (the science, art and practice of mediation) (1).

2-3. His disciple is famous by the name of Sankriti. He was a great devotee of his Guru (moral preceptor and spiritual guide) Dattatreya. One day he approached his teacher most politely when he was alone and humbly requested him (2), ‘Oh Lord! Please describe to me ‘Astang Yoga’ (the 8 fold path of Yoga) in detail so that with the help of that sublime knowledge I can free myself from the fetters of this mundane life and obtain liberation and deliverance’ (2-3).

4-5. The great Yogi (ascetic) Dattatreya replied, ‘Oh Sankriti! I shall elucidate the system of philosophy of Yoga having 8 main branches or limbs. Listen to them carefully.

They are the following—(i) ‘Yam’ (self restraint of passions), (ii) ‘Niyam’ (following of rules and regulations that pertain to a regulated and self-restrained way of life; sacrosanct principles and tenets, the codes of conduct that enables an aspirant to succeed in Yoga), (iii) ‘Asan’ (various sitting postures) [4],---

---(iv) 'Pranayam' (control of breath), (v) 'Pratyahar' (pronounced as "Pratyaahaar": meaning to divert the mind away from gratification of sense organs and exercising control over it), (vi) 'Dhaarna' (firm belief, conviction and faith), (vii) 'Dhyan' (concentration and focusing of the mind and intellect, contemplation and mediation), and (viii) 'Samadhi' (a trance like state obtained during higher levels of Yoga when the ascetic loses all awareness of the external gross world, and instead remains in a blissful state of internal awareness of the consciousness) [5]. (4-5)

6. 'Yam' (self restraint) is again of 10 types—(i) 'Ahinsa' (non-violence and non-cruelty), (ii) 'Satya' (truthfulness), (iii) 'Asteya' (non-theft or non-stealing), (iv) 'Brahmacharya'¹ (practicing self-control over the sense organs and their natural desire for gratification; to focus the mind and the body on Brahm-realisation), (v) 'Daya' (mercy, compassion), (vi) 'Kshama' (forgiveness) (vii) 'Saratata' (simplicity, humility, non-deceit), (viii) 'Dhriti' (stability, unwavering and steadfastness of mind), (ix) 'Mitahar' (regulated and nourishing diet devoid of indulgence) and (x) 'Saucha' (purity, both external and internal) (6).

[Note—¹The term "Brahmcharaya" is very much misunderstood and misquoted. It primarily refers to that part of life when a practitioner exercises exemplary self-control—or "continence"—over his gross organs of the body so that all his energy and attention can be focused on higher goals of life—such as spiritual upliftment and 'self' as well as 'Brahm' realisation. Now, if one allows oneself to indulge in gratifying the urges of the body, a lot of his time and energy would be spent on this activity, leaving him exhausted and weary to the extent that he would have little stamina or will left to pursue higher goals of life.

Worldly indulgences can never give sustainable peace, happiness and bliss; it's like seeking water in a desert mirage. On the other hand, self-restraint that prevents the creature from falling into this trap is 'Brahmacharya'—i.e. practicing the principles of life as practiced by acclaimed ascetics.

Brahmacharya is to live a life that contributes to Brahm-realisation; it is to practice the principles that enable a person to attain success in his pursuit of knowledge of the higher goals of life, to become wise and learned.

Usually the term applies to the first phase of a person's life, the 1st quarter of his life, when he is supposed to spend time studying and imbibing knowledge that would prepare him to face life and the tumble and turmoil of the world. A student who concentrates his mind on his studies will obviously do well and shine in his chosen field as compared to one who spends his time enjoying and fooling around.

Therefore, a person who practices the principles of Brahmacharya thorough out his life becomes empowered with special powers and energy that help him to achieve stupendous feats which his peers who fritter away their internal energy in worldly pursuit and self-indulgence can't hope to achieve.

Brahmacharya is not merely 'celibacy' or control over the sexual urges; it is a comprehensive term encompassing "total self-control" over the tendencies of the gross body consisting of the sense organs of action and perception, as well as the subtle aspects of the body consisting of the mind and heart.]

7. Oh the one who is well steeped in austerities and penances, or who is a treasure of these glorious virtues called 'Tapa'! Besides what has been described by the truthful Vedas, violence also includes tormenting or torturing anyone or making him suffer by one's 'mind' (i.e., by one's thoughts, ideas, planning, scheming or any laws and rules framed by the mind with malefic intentions), 'speech' (i.e., orders and commands, words of insult, criticism, rebuke, defamation, insinuation, scolding, humiliation, ridicule and sarcasm, including, inter alia, irritating jokes which are not liked by the person for whom they are meant etc.), and 'body' (e.g., beating anyone, fighting with him, tying or trapping him, using offensive gestures or any other means of physical action which might cause harm to the other person, directly or indirectly, is also called violence). If obviously includes in its ambit taking of the victim's life (literally, separating the life of the victim from his body, i.e. killing, dismembering or decapitating him). These are the various forms of violence and no other definition defines it (7).

8. Oh sage! One should hold the firm belief and be convinced that the essential element called the Atma is immanent and all-pervading, it is present uniformly and universally in all the creatures without any distinction; it is immutable and imperishable. So, it cannot be destroyed or killed by the use of any weapon. Atma cannot be caught hold of or grasped or tied by the hand or any other sense organs. Such an enlightened view and wise thought are described as the best form of 'non-violence' by those who are experts in the basic tenets/principles of Vedanta (8).

9. Oh great sage! Whatever is perceived and understood by a man by the medium of the 5 sense organs of perception such as the eyes etc. (the other being nose, tongue, ears and skin) which enables him to comprehend and collate the various stimuli received from the external world, such as what he sees, hears, smells, taste and feels, to use the mouth and the faculty of speech to faithfully narrate about those perceptions (or the views, sounds, smells, taste and feelings) or to indicate honestly and truthfully about them by using gestures (if this man is unable to speak or use his voice, as for example in the case of a dumb man) —this is called the 'Truth'. Except this faithful and honest statement of what one perceives and understands himself, there is no other definition of 'truth' (9).

10. 'Everything is nothing else but a revelation of the supreme, truthful and transcendental Brahm; there is nothing that exists that is not this Brahm—this firm belief and conviction has been defined as the 'best form of truthfulness'

by those who are experts in the principals, axioms, maxims and tenets of Vedanta (10).

11. Not to have any desire to take anything belonging to others, right from valuables such as gems, ornaments, gold, jewels etc. to the most inconsequential of things such as a blade of grass, not to greed or yearn for, or literally 'eye' anything big or small belonging to others—this is called 'non-stealing' or 'non-theft' (Asteya) by experts (11).

12. Oh great sage! To keep the Atma (pure self) detached from the world and not involving it in one's normal day to day interaction with it, to remain dispassionate and neutral internally while behaving normally externally, has been defined as the best form of the 'Asteya' by those who are self-realised about the Atma.

[Here the word 'Asteya' means 'non-clinging'. The word 'Atma' means the soul, the true essence of any living being, which in metaphysical terms is his pure consciousness. When a person is not interested in anything, he does not desire to acquire it, or he is not worried about its loss either, nor is he concerned whether it is good or bad. Since a wise and enlightened person realises that his Atma, which is his pure and truthful self, has nothing to do with this world, even though his body and mind are apparently interacting with the latter, internally he remains aloof and totally disinterested as well as unaffected by the entire goings on around him. Since he will have no inclination to desire or derive any benefit from the world, he will not hanker after it, which means that he will not try to usurp something which does not belong to him. This is equivalent to 'non-stealing'] (12).

13. 'Brahmacharya' has been defined as not ever thinking of or imagining about, not ever speaking of or discussing about, and not ever having any physical bodily contact or cohabitation with any woman except one's own wife, and that even during her menstrual period (13).

14. The best form of 'Brahmacharya' is to divert the mind from its wayward habits and inclinations as well as its tendencies to veer and gravitate towards the so-called 4 faults (which are 'Kaam'—lust, passion and lasciviousness; 'Krodh'—anger; 'Lobh'—greed, avarice, yearnings; 'Moha'—attraction, attachments, infatuations, delusions), and instead, concentrate one's mind on the supreme Brahm (14).

15. To treat all the creatures like one treats oneself and to have love, affection, kindness and endearment towards them all by one's thoughts (mind), speech (talk, words) and body (deeds and action), has been defined as mercy and compassion by elders who are experts in the knowledge enshrined in the Vedas (15).

16. Treating all, whether a son, a friend, a wife, an enemy and even one's own self or the Atma, alike, without any distinction or differentiation between them, and treating them all with simplicity of behaviour and thought—this is called 'Aarjava' or equanimity and equity of mind (16).

17. Oh exalted sage! 'Forgiveness' has been defined as not allowing the mind to be the slightest affected by, or to feel anguished, agitated, fretful, peeved or annoyed on being tormented or teased or pricked or insulted by one's enemy's scheming and pervert mind, irritating and unpleasant speech and words, demeanours and deeds done by him (such as assault, ambush, physical violence and other methods of causing injury to the body or insult to the person or harm to his reputation) (17).

18. 'The whole world attains liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation by knowing, and implementing the truthful knowledge about the essence and reality of life as contained (enshrined) in the Vedas (the ancient and primary scriptures), and by no other means'—such a firm conviction and deep rooting of the mind has been defined as 'Dhriti' or stability, steadfastness and firmness of the mind. Or else, the firm and unwavering belief that 'I am the Atma/soul; there is nothing else besides the Atma' is also called the best form of 'Dhriti' (18).

19. To eat limited and balanced food which is pure (i.e., unadulterated, properly cooked, properly cleansed if raw), sanctified (i.e., obtained by righteous, honest means) and sanctioned (i.e., authorised, allowed, honourably presented) two quarters of the stomach, and fill the third quarter with water and let the fourth quarter empty for air—this is called 'proper eating' which is compatible with the practice of Yoga. It is also called 'Mit-Bhojan' or restrained or restricted food intake, or 'non-indulgence in eating' (19).

20. Oh the great sage! 'Saucha', or cleansing, purification and purging, is of three types. Cleaning the gross body with the use of rubbing-clay and washing it off with water is called 'external cleaning'. To think, contemplate upon, to ponder and allow the mind to dwell on pure, good, noble and righteous thoughts, emotions and sentiments, to think and ponder of righteous things instead of unrighteous ones is called 'internal purging or cleaning'. Besides these, the wise ones say that the knowledge that 'I am the pure Atma', such thought is the 'real purging or cleansing or purification' of the creature (20).

21. This gross body is full of various faults, shortcomings and other blemishes, tarnished both externally as well internally, whereas the Atma which dwells in this body is the most pure, incorrupt, faultless and blemishless entity. When this wisdom pertaining to the difference between

the gross body and the subtle Atma dawns on the horizon of the intellect of the creature, then what else is needed to purify or clean it, or who else needs to be purified or cleaned? (21)

22. Oh righteous sage! A seeker/aspirant who forgets about the internal truthful form of cleaning, purity and purging as defined by truthful knowledge and wisdom, and instead remains engrossed in mere physical and external process of cleaning and purification, is like a stupid fool who discards gold and remains busy collecting lumps of clay (22).

23. An ascetic (Yogi) who is fully contented by drinking the elixir called 'Amrit' (the elixir of eternal bliss and happiness) represented by the acquisition of 'Gyan' (wisdom, truthful knowledge, enlightenment, erudition) has nothing left to be done or fulfilled in this world. But if he is not contented and feels that something is wanting in his life, then verily he is not an expert and wise ascetic or is not fully enlightened, wisened and an awakened soul, and not the one who is well-versed in the tenets of the essential and absolute Truth (23).

24. For self-realised, enlightened, wise and erudite souls, there is no obligatory duty or deed that has to be compulsorily done or performed (24).

25. Hence, oh sage, you should employ 'non-violence' and other such means as described in this Canto to acquire truthful knowledge (about the supreme Brahm and the Atma) based on experience and as enshrined in the Vedas, and consequentially become wisened to the fact that the Atma is synonymous with and the same as the imperishable, non-decaying, eternal and infinite Brahm (25).

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Canto 2

1. The 10 'Niyams' (meaning rules, regulations, laws and ethics, codes of conduct and behaviour, principles and practices, manners and etiquettes to be followed or observed by a seeker or aspirant) are the following—(i) 'Tapa' (observing austerity and doing penances; enduring sufferance and hardship for a noble cause), (ii) 'Santosh' (contentedness and satisfaction), (iii) 'Astik' (to have firm belief and conviction, specially in relation to God and spiritual matters), (iv) 'Daan' (making charity, giving of alms and donation), (v) 'Ishwar-Pooja' (worshiping and honouring God, the supreme Lord), (vi) 'Siddhanta Srawan' (hearing of the tenets and principles as enshrined and enunciated by the various scriptures), (vii) 'Lajja' (modesty; shame at misdeeds or misdemeanours) (viii) 'Mati' (intellect, discriminatory powers, wisdom) (ix) 'Japa' (repetition of holy name and divine words), and (x) 'Vrat' (observance of vows, promises; fasting as a means of self-control and purification of the body and the soul) (1).

2. I shall now describe them one by one below (2).

3. To subject the body to sufferings and hardships by observing various vows and fasting, such as for example 'Krichra Chandrayan'¹ and other such austerities and penances as mentioned in the Vedas, is called 'Tapa' by those who are experts and scholars in the knowledge contained in the Vedas (3).

[Note:- 'The word 'Krichra' means one which gives troubles, one which torments and inflicts pain, one which bestows miseries and difficulties. The word 'Chandrayanam' is a religious sacrament regulated by the waxing and waning phases of the moon. It is a sort of fasting wherein a person takes 15 mouthfuls of food on the day of the full moon. Thereafter, with each passing day of the waning phase of the moon, 1 morsel of food is progressively reduced until the time when no food is taken on the day of the dark moon. Subsequently, during the waxing phase of the moon, 1 morsel of food is progressively increased till the time of the full moon when again 15 morsels or mouthfuls are taken. That is, on the dark moon day, the aspirant observes complete fasting. The next day, i.e., the first day of the waxing moon, 1 morsel is taken, on the second day, 2 morsels are taken, and this progresses till the full moon day when 15 mouthfuls are taken. This process of fasting is done to do penances and repentance for one's sins.]

4. 'What is true 'Moksha' (i.e., the true meaning of liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation), how and why does the Atma get trapped in the net cast by this deluding and artificial world'—discussion and pondering about, deep research and insight into, contemplation and meditation upon this subject is defined as the 'Real Tapa' by those who are wise and enlightened and are experts in the knowledge about the absolute Truth and Reality behind creation (4).

5. Whatever is available easily, without any yearnings or greed or desire or hope or longing for or expectations or without causing any inconvenience or harm to others, to be satisfied with it and remain ever contented and cheerful (without making a fuss, fretting for more and better things, and fuming when those things are not available)—this has been called 'Santosh' (contentment and satisfaction) by those who are experts and wise in essential transcendental knowledge (5).

6. To remain completely uninterested in and aloof from everything, to be dispassionate and detached from all the comforts of this world as well as even the joys and comforts of the abode of Brahma (the creator) and other Gods (i.e., the 'heaven'), to remain eternally and infinitely equanimous, happy, blissful, peaceful, tranquil and serene under all circumstances—this has been defined 'the best type of Santosh' by great souls who are most enlightened and wise.

To have firm belief, faith and conviction in the principles, maxims, axioms, doctrines and tenets enshrined in and enunciated by the Vedas and other ancient scriptures—this is called ‘Astikta’, or being a firm believer and a follower of ‘Dharma’ (righteousness, probity, propriety, noble and virtuous thoughts and actions, and having faith in religious behaviour, tenets of the scriptures and their doctrines) (6).

7. The wealth that is produced or acquired by righteous means and is given as charity, alms or donation to scholarly persons who are well versed in the Vedas (i.e., those who are learned), or/and to those who lead a chaste, virtuous and righteous life but are under financial difficulties or undergoing unfavourable circumstances—I regard such giving away of wealth as ‘Daan’ (charity; giving of alms and making of donations) (7).

8. Truthful and real ‘Ishwar Pooja’ (worship of God) is—keeping the heart free from various faults such as ‘Raag’ (various attractions, infatuations, endearments and allurements of this mundane, delusionary, entrapping and artificial world), keeping the speech free from ‘Asatya’ (speaking a lie or indulging in falsehoods), and keeping away from ‘Hinsa’ (cruelty, violence, both physical and mental, actual or implied) (8).

9. ‘It is the truth, it is an embodiment of ‘Gyan’ (truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment), it is eternal, infinite and without a beginning and an end, it is the best and the most exalted, it is universal, constant and immutable, it is steady and unwavering, and it is an embodiment of supreme bliss and beatitude as well as happiness and peace’—this is the Atma. To hear this principle tenet repeatedly, and having a firm conviction in the truthfulness of what is being said and heard, has been called ‘hearing of Vedanta¹’ by the wise and enlightened ones (i.e., hearing the discourses on the Vedas and the Upanishads as enunciated by those who are scholars and wise teachers). (9)

[Note—¹The word “Vedanta” is significant here because it implies the conclusion of the philosophy of the Vedas, their essentials summarised in the teachings of the Upanishads. Vedanta literally means ‘the end of the Vedas’. They contain the essentials and the boiled-down and distilled essential elements of the Vedas]

10. To have natural reluctance, shyness and hesitation to do anything which is deemed as unrighteous, un-virtuous, degrading and denigrating, loathsome and contemptible and worthy of abandonment by the Vedas as well as by established traditions of the society and the world —this is known as ‘Lajja’ or to have shame for misconduct, to be modest, to feel shy and dishonourable in doing anything wrong, and to be bashful about it, to abhor any such act that is considered unrighteous, inauspicious and improper.

To have full and firm belief and faith in, to revere and honour the words and teachings of the Vedas—this is called ‘Mati’, or to have right way

of thought and wisdom; to have a mind that is righteous, wise and intelligent enough to distinguish between the wrong and the right (10).

11. To diligently repeat the divine ‘Mantras’ or hymns of the Vedas¹ according to the prescribed norms or methods as laid therein inspite of the fact that elders might advise and give permission to follow other means or methods to repeat or chant or pronounce the Vedic hymns —this is known as doing ‘Japa’ (repetition of Mantras) (11).

[Note:- ¹The words of the Vedas are called ‘Smriti’ because in ancient times, the Vedic texts were passed from generation to generation, from the teacher to his disciples, by verbal mode, and perpetuated by the process of ‘hearing and memorising’, called ‘Sruti’. They weren’t written down as text books, but were instead learnt by rote. This however had its limitations and was the main cause why there was so much tinkering and interpolations with the texts of the Vedas. This is also the reason why so many different versions and interpretation exist for the texts, causing schisms. These additions and interpolations, whether done intentionally or inadvertently, were so intertwined with the texts that it was impossible to delineate them and to know what originally was said in the texts by the sages who had first conceptualised those Vedas. One single wrong letter or word or phrase memorised by a disciple will be passed on to the next generation of disciple in the wrong way. And, if there was no tampering, it surely must have been a marvellous achievement, a remarkable feat by any reasonable standard that the texts which we have today are those that existed when they were first conceptualised.]

12. To keep the wayward tendency of the mind focused and concentrated on the Vedas, the ‘Kalpasutras’ (the various principle tenets and codes of behaviour as prescribed for the different eras), the various ‘Dharma Shastras’ (religious scriptures), ‘Purans’ and ‘Itihas’ (mythological and traditional histories), or to keep the mind busy in reading, studying, discussing and learning those texts —this is true ‘Japa’ in my view (12).

[Note:-The general meaning and understanding of the word ‘Japa’ is ‘constant repetition of any holy name of the God or any divine word or Mantra’. This verse tells us that if that is not possible for a man, or if he is not interested in it, then the next best option for him is to read good books. This will have similar good effects on his mind as doing ‘Japa’. Because if the mind is not kept busy, it will gravitate towards corrupt and pervert thinking; it cannot sit idle. If it is not possible to leash it by means of chanting or repetition of ‘Mantras’, then at least it should be reined in by reading good books instead of allowing it to wander aimlessly here and there like a vagrant indulging in useless roaming about. Remember, an idle mind is the workshop of devil.]

13. 'Japa' is of two types—one is 'verbal' (or when the various Mantras are uttered audibly and in a pronounced way), and the other is 'mental' (when the Mantras are repeated mentally and not aloud) (13).

14. The verbal 'Japa' is again of two types—(i) with a loud and audible voice, and (ii) with a low murmur. Similarly, mental 'Japa' is of two types—(i) to repeat the divine 'Mantras' mentally but mechanically, and (ii) to concentrate upon what is being repeated (14).

15. The 'Japa' done with a low voice (i.e., a murmur or whisper) is a thousand times better than that done by a loud and audible voice. Likewise, mental 'Japa' is a thousand times better than verbal 'Japa' (15).

16. A 'Japa' done with a loud voice is indeed beneficial to all who hear it (the Mantra), but if it is heard by unworthy people who are ineligible, are lowly and pervert mentally, are incompetent or inept and of a low intellect, it becomes futile and waste of effort (i.e., it will be subject to ridicule and scorn by them, creating unnecessary ill-will and frustration) (16).

{Note—The principles enunciated in Canto 1 and 2 of this Upanishad are like a beacon-light for a righteous and noble way of life on this earth. The basic tenets of Buddhism and Jainism, the two main religions having their roots in India, and Christianity of the West, are distinctly and definitively similar and reflective of the doctrines enumerated and enunciated in these Cantos. A brief glimpse of these will help the reader to get enlightened on this subject—

(1) Buddhism— Buddhism prescribes that extreme paths of indulgence in worldly luxuries and severe tormenting of the body by 'Tapa' must be avoided. The best path is the 'middle path'. This path is called 'the 8-fold path of discipline or righteousness'. These are the following—right belief, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right means of livelihood, right thought (mind), right means, and right efforts. Buddhism further prescribed 10 precepts for its monks (or ascetics)—do not kill, do not steal, do not lie, do not drink intoxicants, do not indulge in food, do not engross in pleasures and gratifications, remain chaste, don't sleep in luxury (i.e., observe austerity and self control, desist from indulgences and gratifications), don't accept gold/silver (i.e., be a true renunciate, don't greed or yearn).

The 4 Noble Truths of Buddhism also reflect the basic teaching of the Upanishads—(i) life is full of sorrows, (ii) the cause for this sorrow is craving/desire, (iii) this craving can be overcome by diverting the mind to righteousness (and the Atma, according to the Upanishads), and (iv) the way to do it is following the 8-fold path which are very similar to the tenets outlined in this Jabal Darshan Upanishad.

(2) Jainism—The word 'Jain' simply put means 'one who has conquered himself'. Its basic tenets are briefly the following— (i) the 'Jiva' (creature) is like a bubble of air. It always wants to go up (rise in stature, a concept

very similar to Yoga philosophy in which the vital wind called 'Pran' and the cosmic energy trapped in the various subtle energy centers called 'Chakras' are activated, and this energy, along with the vital winds, rises up the 'Sushumna nerve' from the 'Kundalini' up to the 'Brahm-Randhra Chakra' present in the top of the head). It is the 'Karma' (deeds) that pull a person down from this higher level which he has attained. (ii) The 3 gems of wisdom are— right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct. Right conduct means— (a) sanctity of life or following the path of non-violence, (b) truthfulness, (c) respect for property belonging to others (non-stealing), (d) chastity (of the mind and body), (e) renunciation of worldly possessions (or to be detached from the world while still living in it, to be dispassionate about it), and (f) abstain from self-gratification (or exercise self control).

Jainism states that the final 'Nirvaan' (salvation and emancipation; Moksha) comes when the 'bubble-like soul' merges with the 'ocean of bliss'. [This concept is identical with the teachings of the Upanishads which say that the Atma of the creature is nothing more than the wind element; its final liberation is when it is released from the trappings of the body and merges with the wind element of the cosmos. The word bliss is also very much used by the Upanishads when they tell us that 'Samadhi', which is the culmination of 'Yoga', leads to bliss and happiness for the ascetic. Further, when the Atma merges its self with the supreme Atma or Brahm, the former also finds bliss and happiness.

Thus we see that Buddhism and Jainism are heavily influenced by the teachings of the Upanishads. And there is no wonder in it also because both these religions have sprouted from the same soil of India from which germinated the profound philosophies of the Upanishads and their different exponents in the form of erudite and enlightened sages and seers, such as Jabal of the present Upanishad.

(3) Christianity— Now, let us see what Christ said in his sermon from the Mount— 'Blessed are the poor (humble), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; blessed are they that mourn (regret), for they shall be comforted; blessed are the meek (simple and humble, docile and quiet), for they shall inherit the earth; blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled; blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy; blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the children of God; blessed are when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil things against you —rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven; ...ye are the light of world (i.e., are wise, erudite and enlightened souls)' (The Holy Bible, Gospel of St. Matthew, 5/3-12, 14).

The famous preachings or commandments of Jesus are equally relevant here— (i) The Lord our God is one (the non-dual Brahm of the Upanishads) (Gospel, St. Mark, 12/29); (ii) Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, there is none other commandment (12/29); (ii) Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, there is none other commandment greater than these. [This is very similar to the teachings of the Upanishads that one should treat all the

creatures alike because the same Atma resides in all of them.] (Gospel, St. Mark, 12/31); (iii) Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you (Gospel, St. Luke, 6/27-28); but love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again (Gospel, St. Luke, 6/35); (iv) And as ye would that man should do to you, do ye also to them likewise (Gospel, St. Luke, 6/31); (v) Be ye therefore be merciful (Gospel, St. Luke, 6/36); (vi) Judge not and ye shall not be judged; condemn not and ye shall not be condemned; (vii) Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven (Gospel, St. Luke, 6/37); (viii) Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled (Gospel, St. Luke, 6/21); (ix) Blessed are ye when men shall hate you,shall reproach you and cast out your name as evil (Gospel, St. Luke, 6/22)'.

Jesus Christ further says— 'Thou knowest the commandments —do not commit adultery, do not kill, to not steal, do not bear false witness (i.e., do not tell a lie), defraud not (don't cheat), honour thy father and mother (i.e., your elders and your teachers)' (Gospel, St. Mark, 10/19); 'And lead us not unto temptations, but deliver us from evils; For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father shall also forgive you' (Gospel, St. Matthew, 6/13-14); 'When ye fast, be not of a sad countenance (because fasting is a form of 'Tapa' in the language of the Upanishads), but anoint thy head (like putting a 'Tilak Mark') and wash thy face, that those appear not unto men who fast (i.e., don't show off that you are fasting), but unto thy father (God) which is in secret, and thy father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly (Gospel, St. Matthew, 6/17-18); 'Lay not up for yourself treasures upon earth (i.e., have renunciation, dispassion and detachment towards worldly objects; do not hoard wealth and greed for it), where moth and rust doth decay (i.e., which is perishable, a concept propounded by the Upanishads), but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven (i.e., obtaining salvation and emancipation, 'Moksah' which provides eternal happiness, joy, bliss and beatitude which are the best treasures any man can ever expect to acquire), where moth nor rust doth corrupt (i.e., where there is eternal life); For where your treasure is, there will your heart also be (i.e., if you think of the world, don't ever expect for liberation and deliverance from it, but if your mind is focused on the supreme Brahm, you are sure to find emancipation and salvation)' (Gospel, St. Matthew, 6/19-21).

'Thy whole body shall be full of light (i.e., the soul or Atma, which is symbolic of light of enlightenment and bliss, pervades uniformly in all the creatures; Brahm symbolically also pervades everything everywhere; light antidotes darkness of delusion and ignorance. Once a person becomes enlightened, his whole body effuses with the divine glory of Brahm in the form of a halo surrounding him)' (Gospel, St. Matthew, 6/22).

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Canto 3

The next eight Cantos from 3 to 10 deal with Yoga. This Canto describes the various 'Aasans' or sitting postures during Yoga exercises. The reader should also refer to Yogchudamani Upanishad to fully understand the implication of Cantos 3-10 of this Upanishad.

1-5. 'Aasans' (the various sitting postures) are said to be of 9 kinds— (i) 'Swastik', (ii) 'Gomukh', (iii) 'Padmasan', (iv) 'Virasan', (v) 'Singhasan', (vi) 'Bhadrasan', (vii) 'Muktasan', (viii) 'Mayurasan' [1], and (ix) 'Sukhasan'.

Oh great sage! To sit cross-legged so that the foot of one leg rests on the middle of the thigh of the other side between the knee joint and pelvic girdle, with the sole pointing outwards [2],---

---while keeping the chin, the head and the body straight (in a vertical straight-line position), is called 'Swastik Aasan'. This sitting posture should be practiced daily. To bend the right leg at the knee joint and tuck the ankle of the right foot under the base of the thigh of the left leg below the buttocks of that side (and the ankle of the left under the base of the right thigh below the right buttock), is called 'Gomukh Aasan'. Literally, this is the way how a cow sits. While sitting in this posture, first one of the two legs is folded in and tucked below the buttock of the opposite side, as describe here, while the other leg is stretched out in the front. After sometime, the process is reversed—the stretched out leg is folded in and the folded leg is stretched out.

To keep the foot of one leg on the thigh of the opposite leg (i.e., right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh), taking each hand behind and round the back to clasp the big toe of the foot of the same side placed on the thighs of the corresponding opposite leg (i.e., left hand should clasp the big toe of the left leg which has been placed on the right thigh, and vice versa), is called 'Baddha Padmasan' or closed Padmasan.

Oh the king amongst sages, or the most exalted or honoured sage! This 'Aasan' removes the fear from all diseases (i.e., it has the potential to provide good health) [3-5] (1-5).

6. To sit in a 'Virasan' posture, the right leg is closed (turned inwards at the knee) and the person should sit with his right buttock resting on the ankle of the bent leg, such that this sole points backwards and outwards (and the weight of the body is supported by the toes of the right foot, pointed inwards). The left leg is bent at approximate 90° at the knee, with the sole of the foot flat on the ground (6).

7. The sitting posture called 'Singhasan' is this—tuck both the ankle joints (by folding the legs inwards and backwards) under the buttocks in such away that the right ankle joint is to the left of the suture, i.e. the junction point of the testicles and the anus, and the left ankle joint is to the right in a similar fashion. Both the hands should be stretched out straight and the open palms kept on the knee of the corresponding side with the fingers spread out like a

fork on that knee (i.e., left palm should rest facing down on the left knee and the right palm on the corresponding right knee of the bent leg, with outstretched fingers).

Then, open the mouth wide and fix the attention and sight on the tip of the nose. This is a posture adored by ascetics (Yogis) (7).

8. To sit in a posture by placing the two ankle joints under the buttocks on either side of the suture, i.e. the junction point of the testicles and the anus such that they (the two ankle joints) touch each other, and then using the hands to firmly clasp the soles from the back side of the buttock, is called 'Bhadrasan'. This posture can neutralise the ill effects of all diseases which cause the production of toxins in the body (or which are caused by administration of poisons or other toxins in the body; it helps to get rid of diseases as well) (8).

9. 'Muktasan' is a posture wherein the fold of the skin at the junction of the two testicles and the anus is pressed by the left ankle, and the right ankle is pressed against the left ankle. [In this posture, the aspirant is perched delicately on the toes of both the feet] (9).

10. Oh sage! Another alternative posture which is also called 'Muktasan' is to sit with the left ankle placed on the genitals and the right ankle is placed on the top of the left ankle. [For this posture, the aspirant will have to sit in a cross-legged sitting posture] (10).

11-12. Oh the most exalted sage! To adopt 'Mayurasan' (literally, to sit like a peacock), the Yogi should place his palms flat on the ground and press the outer edge of the elbows of the hands on either side of the navel. After that, slowly, the legs and the head should be lifted upwards as the body is balanced on the hands (with the elbow pressing against the abdomen and the palms of the hands used as support), and the body is held parallel to the ground. This 'Mayurasan' has the potential to destroy all sins (11-12).

13. Any posture which is comfortable, and in which the aspirant Yogi can maintain his patience and concentration (without getting physically restless and uneasy), is called 'Sukhasan', literally, the posture of comfort and compatibility. Those aspirants who are not adept or competent enough to adopt tough posture as described in verse nos. 2-12, are advised to sit in any position which is comfortable to them (13).

[Note:-This is very important—to sit in a comfortable position. It establishes that the science of Yoga is not a rigorous exercise meant to torture the body in the name of purification or spiritualism. The main thrust is on sincerity, dedication, discipline, diligence and commitment on the part of the aspirant so that the main objective of meditation and contemplation is achieved, and not to accomplish acrobatic feats to impress others. An honest doctor will concentrate on curing the disease of the patient with minimum of

inconvenience to him and not on medical extravaganzas or medical acrobatics or medical gymnastics just to impress him and his family how great a doctor he is! Extended further, this principle holds true for the whole gamut of the Upanishadic philosophy—their main object is upliftment of the soul of the creature and provide a better and healthier life to the individual by making this earth as closely heavenly as possible by prescribing the way of life that can actually make a man happy, joyful, blissful and contented, rather than to create a quagmire or a swamp of rigorous exercises to scare away an aspirant or to sink him in a set of rigorous doctrines and dogmas which will bog him down instead of lifting him up, scare him away instead of attracting him. That it has been made out to be so, if at all, then it is not the fault of the ancient wise sages and seers who composed the Upanishads, but by those who later on inherited the wisdom and twisted it to serve their own vested interests, interpolating and re-interpreting the original texts to suit their convenience, whatever those interests and conveniences might have been.]

14. Those who have mastered the art (literally, conquered the art) of these various ‘Aasans’ have de facto brought the whole of the 3 worlds (Triloki—the subterranean, terrestrial and celestial worlds) under their control. Therefore, oh Sankriti, use anyone one of these postures described in this Canto and do regular ‘Pranayam’ exercises (i.e., practice to control your breath and vital winds present in your body by sitting in any of the postures which is comfortable to you) (14).

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Canto 4

This Canto describes the various nerves and veins called Naadis in the body. The Atma is treated as a pilgrim site and the benefits of truthful knowledge of the Atma are also described here.

1; This human body measures 96 finger-width in length. Its central part (upper abdomen) is the designated place for presence of the divine, cosmic, subtle and sublime ‘fire’. Its countenance or colour or shade or complexion has been described as that of very hot and glowing piece of gold (1).

2-3. It is triangular in shape. This is a fact that I have told you. Oh Sankriti! The point in the body which is 2 fingers above the anus and 2 fingers to the side of the genitals (2)---

---should be regarded as the basic or resting or supporting part of the human body. Oh the best amongst sages! This part (area or point) is called ‘Muladhar’¹. 9 fingers above this place is the area called ‘Kanda’² (2-3).

[Note:- ¹The word *Muladhar* means a principal place or the root or fundamental place or foundation upon which everything else rests, or the

place which gives support to all others. It is one of the principal 7 nerve centers in the body where all the Naadis coordinate and form a knot of nerves. These 7 centers are called Chakras. They are— (i) Muladhar, (ii) Swadhisthan, (iii) Manipurak, (iv) Anahat, (v) Vishuddha, (vi) Agaya and (vii) Sahastrar Chakras in the body. The word comes from 'Mool' meaning 'a seed, the head, the source, the beginning, the root of a tree'. Hence, it is a metaphor for that portion of the body which harbours the divine subtle fire which, when aroused and kindled, can foster life in the creature. Muladhar is the foundation of life, as it were, because the life rests on it.

²The *Kanda* means 'a root which is edible', e.g., radish. Kanda is located near the navel, is approximately 12 inches above the opening of the anus, approximately 4 inches in diameter, and is about 12 fingers in length. It is enclosed or encased by a soft, silk like shroud made of a jelly like membrane. It is oblong and shaped like an egg.]

4. Oh great sage! 'Kanda' itself is 4 fingers wide in diameter. It is shaped like a hen's egg. It is covered by a skin (membrane) (4).

5. Oh great sage! In the centre of the 'Kanda' area is located the navel. This is what the great sages or hermits who were experts in the science of Yogahave said. The nerve present in the centre of the 'Kanda' (as its core) is called 'Sushumna Naadi' (5).

6-8. The 'Kanda' is surrounded by a dense network of nerves numbering 72 thousand. Out of these, the following are regarded as the chief or principal ones—'Sushumna', 'Pingla', 'Eda', 'Saraswati', 'Pusa', 'Varuna', 'Hastjihwa', 'Yashaswini', 'Alambusa', 'Kuhu', 'Vishwodara', 'Payaswini', 'Shankhini', 'Gandhari' (6-8).

[Note:- The word 'Naadi' means a 'tubular duct'. It refers to both the veins that carry blood as well as to the nerves that carry various impulses to and from the brain to and from the various parts of the body. They are akin to an insulated electric wire that carries electrical impulses, the only difference being that here the Naadis carry vital energy of the body which is also like any electrical gadget.]

9. Out of these 14 nerves, the 1st three are the most important ones (and they are 'Sushumna', 'Pingla' and 'Eda'). Even out of these three, the 1st one i.e., 'Sushumna nerve' is considered the most important one. Those sages who were experts in the Vedanta have called it 'Brahm Naadi' (or the nerve which enables a seeker or an aspirant to have direct link with the supreme, transcendental Brahm, or which leads directly to Brahm, or which is the pathway to Brahm) (9).

10. Oh the righteous one! This 'Sushumna' nerve passes though the central core of the spinal cord and goes up to the head (brain) (10).

11. Oh the most exalted sage! 2 finger width distance below the 'Kanda' situated in the navel region (see verse no. 4-5), is situated the 'Kundalini'. It is said to be an embodiment, or an image, or a personification of the 8 elements that make up an individual man¹ (11).

[Note :- ¹These 8 elements are—earth, water, fire, wind and sky constituting the gross body as well as the mind and intellect and 'Ahankar' (ego, pride) which constitute the subtle body of the man.]

12. It blocks the vital winds, the water element and the energy derived from food (from activating the brain). It girdles the 'Kanda' (i.e., the part of the 'Kanda' situated in the region of the navel; see verse nos. 3-5) from all the sides (12).

13. [The location of the chief nerves is described in the following verses—] Oh sage! It (Kundalini) blocks the mouth of the 'Brahm-Randhra' (located at the base of the spine) with its own tip. To the left of the 'Sushumna' is the 'Eda' nerve, and to the right is the 'Pingla' nerve (13).

14. The 'Saraswati' and 'Kuhu' nerves are located on either side, slightly on the back of the 'Sushumna' nerve. At the back of the 'Eda' nerve is situated the 'Gandhari' nerve, and on its front side is present the 'Hastijihvaha' nerve (14).

15. At the back of the 'Pingla' nerve is located the 'Pusa' nerve, and to its front is present the 'Yashaswini' nerve. In between the 'Kuhu' and the 'Hastijihvaha' nerves is located the 'Vishwodari' nerve (15).

16. The 'Varuna' nerve is located in between the Yashaswini and the 'Kuhu' nerves. The 'Payaswini' nerve is situated between the 'Pusa' and the 'Saraswati' nerves (16).

17. The 'Shankhini' nerve is located between the 'Gandhari' and the 'Saraswati' nerves. The 'Alambusa' nerve passes through the center of the 'Nabhi Kanda' and goes up to the anus (17).

18. The 'Sushumna' nerve is also called 'Raka'. To the east of it is the 'Kuhu' nerve. It is present both in the lower part as well as the upper part of the body, and it extends right up to the right nostril (18).

19. The 'Eda' nerve goes right upto the left nostril. The 'Yashaswini' nerve extends up to the big toe of the left foot (19).

20. The 'Pusa' nerve goes up behind the 'Pingla' nerve and reaches up to turn towards the left eye, while the 'Payaswini' nerve has been said to go right up to right ear (20).

21. Oh sage! The ‘Saraswati’ nerve extends upwards till the tongue; the ‘Hastijihvaha’ nerve extends down up to the big toe of the left foot (21).

22. The nerve named ‘Shankhini’ has spread up to the left ear. Experts in Vedanta say that the ‘Gandhari’ nerve goes up to the left eye (22).

[Note:- Careful reading of verse nos. 13-22 shows that (a) ‘Alambusa’ is the only nerve which passes down from the tip of the ‘Kanda’ located in the area of the navel, through its central core, up to the anus, while verse no. 23 (below) tells us that Vishwodara also passess through the center of Kanda. (b) The rest of the 13 nerves out of the total 14 (see verse no. 6-8) pass through the spinal cord right up to the upper organs of the body —the nose, the ears, the eyes and the head, as well as to the lower part —the toes and the sole of the foot.]

23-24. The ‘Vishwodara’ nerve lies in the center of the ‘Nabhi Kanda’. [Now, the vital winds are being described—] There are 10 so-called ‘Pran Vayu’ (pronounced as Praan Vaayu: the internal vital winds sustaining life of a creature). These are the following—‘Pran’ (pronounced as “Praan”), ‘Apaan’, ‘Vyan’ (pronounced as “Vyaan”), ‘Samaan’, ‘Udan’ (pronounced as “Udaan”), ‘Naag’, ‘Kurma’, ‘Krikar’, ‘Devdutta’, and ‘Dhananjay’.

These vital winds circulate through all the veins and nerves of the body (23-24).

25. Out of these, only 5 vital winds are important. Oh sage! Even out of these 5, only ‘Pran’ (breath) and ‘Apaan’ (the wind passing down the elementary canal in the form of flatus) are considered the most important and venerated ones (25).

26. Oh the most exalted sage! The vital wind called ‘Pran’ dwells in the nostril, the mouth, the center of the navel and the heart (26).

27. The ‘Apaan Vayu’ is always present in the anus, rectum, genitals, thighs, knees, the entire stomach, hips, the navel region, and the area below it up to the genitals (27).

28. The ‘Vyan’ wind dwells in the ears, the eyes, the two shoulders, the elbows, and all other places where ‘Pran’ (the first wind) dwells, including the throat (28).

29. The ‘Udan Vayu’ has its location in the hands and the legs, while the ‘Samaan Vayu’ is, without doubt, spread over the whole body (29).

30. The remaining 5 winds (see verse no. 23-24) are present in the skin and the bones. Oh Sankriti! The ‘Pran Vayu’ enables a person to inhale, exhale and cough (30).

31. The 'Apaan Vayu' enables the passage of stool and urine (the functioning of the excretory organs). Oh great sage! The 'Samaan Vayu' maintains the equilibrium in the body (31).

32. The 'Udan Vayu' goes up into the head. Those who are experts in the principles of Vedanta believe that the 'Vyan Vayu' activates the powers of speech (32).

33. Oh great sage! The 'Naag Vayu' is responsible for belching, vomiting etc. [The word 'Naag' means a serpent, a dragon.] Oh Sankriti! The 'Dhananjay' wind is responsible for beauty and good looks of the body. [Such as a tout, wrinkle free, glowing and shiny skin, erect and good posture, robust built and well developed muscles, shoulders etc.] (33).

34. The 'Kurma Vayu' enables the closing and opening of the eyelids. The 'Krikar Vayu' creates hunger and thirst, while the 'Devdutta Vayu' creates laziness, sluggishness, lethargy, indolence, inertia etc. (34).

35. [The patron Gods of the nerves are named now—] Oh Sage! Shiva is the patron God of the 'Sushumna' nerve while Vishnu is of 'Eda' and Brahma of 'Pingla' nerves. 'Viraat' (the macrocosmic form of Brahm) is the patron God of Saraswati (35).

36. The 'Pusa' nerve has 'Aditya' (the Sun-God) bearing the same name (i.e., the sun is also called 'Pusa'), the 'Varuna' nerve has 'Vayu God' (i.e., the Wind-God) as its patron, while the 'Hastijihvaha' nerve has 'Varuna' (Water-God) as its patron God (36).

37. Oh the best amongst sages! The Sun-God is the patron deity for the 'Yashaswini' nerve, while the 'Alambusa' nerve has 'Varun' (the Water-God) as its patron God (37).

38. The 'Kuhu' nerve has 'hunger' as its patron Goddess, and the moon is the patron God of both the 'Gandhari' and the 'Shankhini' nerves. 'Prajapati is the patron God of the 'Payaswini' nerve (38).

39-45. The Fire-God is the patron God for the 'Vishwodar' nerve. Oh great sage! The Moon-God always moves through and pervades throughout in the 'Eda' nerve (39),---

---while the Sun-God does so in the 'Pingla' nerve. Oh the most senior sage amongst those who are experts in the knowledge of the Vedas (मुने वेदविदां वर)! The transition of the vital wind from the 'Pingla' nerve to the 'Eda' nerve (40)---

---is symbolic of the summer solstice of the sun according to those who are experts in the science contained in the Veda. Conversely, the shifting

of the wind in the opposite direction, i.e., from the 'Eda' to the 'Pingla' nerve (41)---

---is regarded as the winter solstice of the sun according to the Vedas. When the vital wind called 'Pran' is in the junction point of the 'Eda' and 'Pingla' nerves (42),---

---then, oh great sage, it is regarded as a symbolic dark moon night called 'Amavasya' inside the body. [These verses describe the various stages when the vital wind of one nerve passes on to another nerve as done during 'Pranayam' exercises. The winter solstice is when the sun is south of the equator, the period from June 21 till December 22; the summer solstice is when the sun is north of the equator between December 22 and June 21] (39-42½).

Oh the best amongst experts! When the 'Pran' (the vital wind) enters the 'Muladhar Chakra' (also called 'Agni Kunda' which is located between the genitals and anus) (43),---

---expert ascetics (Yogis) have called that stage as the emergence state of 'Adya Vishuv Yoga'. Oh the exalted sage! When the 'Pran Vayu' enters 'Murdan' or 'Sahasraar Chakra' (also known as 'Vyom Chakra' located in the top of the head) (44),---

---then those who are great philosophers and thinkers in the realm of the science of Yoga call it as the end or culmination of the 'Vishuv Yoga'.

All exhalation and inhalation of breath have been likened to the month of 'Sankranti'. ['Sankranti' is the period when a planet passes from one sign of the zodiac to another; it means union and refers to the solstice point when the sun is transiting from one side of the equator to the other] (45).

46. Oh the most expert sage who is well-versed in the essential knowledge of the Vedas! When the 'Pran Vayu' (breath) snakes down the 'Eda' nerve (which goes up to the left nostril; see verse no. 19) and comes near the 'Kundalini' (see verse no. 11), that stage is symbolic of the lunar eclipse (46).

47. Similarly, when the 'Pran' (breath) comes down through the 'Pingla' nerve (located in the right nostril), and comes in the vicinity of the 'Kundalini', then oh the exalted sage, it is likened to the solar eclipse in the body (45).

[Note:- The metaphor of the solar solstice has been used in verse nos. 39-47 to describe the transition of the vital wind called 'Pran' from one energy center in the body to the other. The metaphor of the 'Sun' is used because this 'Pran' is the only vital wind which is the primary source of life. It is synonymous with the Atma of the creature. Since the Atma is as radiant and splendorous as the Sun, the use of the Sun as a metaphor to describe the 'Pran' is most apt. The Sun, as we all know, is the most important celestial body which sustains life on this planet earth.

The term 'eclipse' indicates a shadow or a temporary phase when both the moon and the sun are not visible, but they regain their original glory

soon thereafter. So, when the Pran Vayu is concentrated in the Kundalini, which is located at the base of the spine, it is surrounded by the Apaana Vayu which is laden with impurities. Hence, the use of the metaphor of an 'eclipse'.]

48. [The following verse nos. 48-56 describe the symbolic presence of all the 'Tirths' or pilgrim sites in the various locations inside the body—] The pilgrim site called 'Sri-Shail' or 'Sri-Parvat' (the holy mountain; Mt. Kailash) is symbolically present in the head of a man.

Oh the most wise one! Varanasi is located at the junction of the root of the nose and the central point between the two eyebrows (48).

[Note:- Mt. Kailash is the celestial abode of Lord Shiva while Varanasi, the most ancient city in mythology, is his terrestrial abode. Kailash is in present day Tibet, while Varanasi is a city located in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India.]

49. Kurushetra¹ is located in the breast region. The king of holy sites, 'Prayaag'², is situated in the lotus-like heart of the man. In the center of the heart is the holy site called 'Chidaambaram'³. The holy site called 'Kamlaalayam'⁴ is located at the 'Mulaadhar Chakra' (or the 'Agni Kunda' located between the genitals and the anus) (49).

[Note:- ¹*Kurshetra* is the site of the epic Mahabharat war where Krishna had enunciated the famous 'Gita' to Arjun on the battle-field prior to the commencement of the war. It is located in Haryana state of northern India.

²*Prayaag* is the ancient name of the city of Allahabad in present day state of Uttar Pradesh in India; this is the holy city where the 3 holy rivers, Ganges, Yamuna and the mythological Saraswati have their confluence.

³*Chidaambaram* is the place where Lord Shiva has done his cosmic dance called 'Tandava' in the form of Lord Natraj; the present day site of this place is in the state of Tamil Nadu near Madras.

⁴*Kamlaalayam* is the holy site near the capital city of the state of Assam. It is also called 'Kamakhya' and is dedicated to Goddess Parvati.]

50. A person who does not revere and pay due respect and honour to these exalted but subtle pilgrim sites located symbolically inside his own body (i.e., present within himself and not outside), and instead wander around in external pilgrim sites situated in the physical and gross world which is temporal, perishable, artificial and delusory, is like discarding or forsaking a priceless gem in his hand and searching for a piece of worthless glass elsewhere (50).

51. Those pilgrim sites that are visualised by the mind as holy places and honoured and revered as such with due diligence and devotion, though they exist only symbolically in a subtle and sublime form in the body, are said to be the best form of pilgrim sites. A person may embrace a wife and a

daughter, but the emotions involved in these two embraces are very different and diametrically opposite to each other (51).

52. Since an ascetic has the greatest of faith, devotion and reverence towards the symbolic pilgrim/holy sites located inside his own body, he does not seek shelter in terrestrial sites having water bodies (i.e., religious sites having rivers, lakes, ponds etc. where people go and take bath to purify and clean themselves) as well as in idols of Gods made of wood etc. (52).

53. The holy sites symbolically situated inside the individual are better than those situated in the outside world. The former are the 'great pilgrim and holy sites'. All other holy sites are worthless and useless in comparison to those holy sites which are internally situated (53).

54. The corrupted and polluted mind-intellect complex called the subtle body which resides inside the gross, external body of the creature cannot be cleansed or purged of impurities or purified of its faults by dipping or bathing in the water of pilgrim sites of the external world even as a pitcher full of wine will remain impure no matter how much it is washed and scrubbed externally (on the outer surface) in an attempt to clean it as a whole (54).

55. A man becomes purged of his sins, can actually clean and purify himself, by mentally bathing in the various symbolic holy sites such as Varanasi etc. present inside his own body during different auspicious times designated for such bathing rituals, such as the 'Sankranti' period when the sun transfers from the winter to the summer solstice and vice versa, or during the lunar and solar eclipses. The Yogi (ascetic) imagines that all these sites are metaphorically present in his body itself, and the bathing ritual is done by practicing the 'Vishuv Yoga' during the auspicious times fixed for such bathings (55).

[Note :- (i) The location of pilgrim sites in the body is described in verse nos. 48-49. (ii) The various auspicious times for bathing etc. are described in verse nos. 40-47. (iii) The Yoga exercise called 'Vishuv' is described in verse nos. 43-44½. It is a form of Pranayam. (vii) A true renunciate Sanyasi is prohibited from going to pilgrimage and worshipping idols there or taking bath at holy sites by Maitreyu-panishad, canto 2, verse no. 21 and 26. Though the reason for the prohibition is not mentioned there, but verse no. 48-46 of the present canto clearly state it in explicit terms.]

56. The water which is used to wash the feet of a wise, erudite, learned and enlightened ascetic is the best metaphorical holy water of a pilgrim site, which is used to symbolically wash and clean the inner self of those who take a bath there, for those who are ignorant about the truthful reality and essence of the knowledge of the scriptures. That is, ordinary people can use the water used by enlightened ascetics to wash their feet as a replacement or a

substitute for the water from holy pilgrim sites, such as the water from the holy rivers, ponds, lakes or wells etc., because the former is as potential and as capable in providing auspiciousness and all-round welfare as the latter (56).

[Note:- Those people who do not know the reason why worldly pilgrim sites were conceptualised by our ancient sages and seers, what is the subtle meaning and the underlying significance of bathing at those sites, paying visit to temples there, bowing before idols of deities and doing various rituals, and just go on doing them blindly because others are doing it, are like foolish students who learn a lesson by rote, mugging up pages after pages of a book to vomit, as it were, them out in the examination, not knowing their practical applications and not even knowing what they have learnt if asked any searching questions on the subject. In short, their knowledge is only superficial and acquired by rote learning and blind following; they have no in-depth knowledge, no understanding of the subject. For such idiots and fools, pilgrimage is wastage of time, energy and money. The washing of a wise and learned person's feet, and using that washed water as a 'Tirtha' (sanctified holy water), is a symbolic gesture to show that to surrender before and honour a scholarly person is showing respect to his knowledge and wisdom, symbolically asking him to impart correct wisdom and knowledge to the seeker/aspirant. It is far better than dipping in the dirty, smelly, polluted and infects water in religious places. No wonder these prime Upanishads have not reached the common man because should they become wizened to the actual truth, the whole commerce revolving around pilgrimage and holy sites will crumble down like a false façade. So we see how vested interests are preying on innocent souls; how gullible people are being taken for a ride by insincere contractors of religion, as it were. This also applies to shrines of varying denominations. Please read on till verse nos. 59 and the implication will come to the fore without being explicitly mentioned.]

57. The supreme and transcendental Authority which is truthful, real, auspicious, divine, absolute and beautiful (hence, called Shiva) is present inside the body of the individual as his 'Atma' (literally, Shiva who is present inside the body). An ignorant and stupid fool who does not recognise that 'Shiva', or the supreme Lord, is present inside him, searches for him in vain externally in the pilgrim sites of the world, giving donations, doing Japa (repetition of holy Mantras) and performing various 'Yagyas' (fire sacrifices), and also ignorantly sees the Lord in stone and wood idols in futility. [See: Maitreyu-panishad, canto 2, verse no. 26, and Sanyaso-panishad, canto 2, verse no. 74-75 in this context.] (57)

58. He who neglects 'me' who am always present in his bosom as an internal, truthful, steady and universal entity which is the ultimate Supreme Essence and Reality of existence (called Brahm), and instead worships only external idols—such a person is like one who throws away real food present in his

hands and licks at his elbows (or palms where the remnants of the food are sticking here and there after the meal has been eaten)¹ (58).

[Note:- ¹The word *Maam* means ‘me’, but who is that ‘me’? It refers to the supreme Lord who is present in the heart of all living beings as their Atma or soul or spirit. This Atma is pure conscious Brahm who is the only truthful supreme authority in this creation.]

59. Yogis see Lord Shiva in their own ‘Atma’ or pure self, and not in idols made of stones or wood. The idols have been conceived as a medium to ignite affection and devotional emotions dedicated to spiritual upliftment in the heart of ignorant persons (i.e., to ignite devotion in the heart of those people who do not have the mental calibre to understand the essence and ideals of religion). Their role is limited to that only and nothing more. But the irony is that foolish people, in their ignorance, imagine that the gross idol is the supreme Lord! (59).

[Note:- The reader should also read verse nos. 52-57 and 58 as well as footnote of verse no. 56 of this Canto in this context, as well as the following two Upanishadic proclamation pertaining to this subject—(i) Maitreu-panishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 21 and 26; and (ii) Sanyaso-panishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 74, 75 and 97.]

60. Nothing had a separate or distinct existence from ‘it’ in the past or shall have in the future. That which is an embodiment of Truth and Reality, is uniquely auspicious, magnificent and beautiful, is a treasury of enlightenment, wisdom, erudition and knowledge, and is the supreme bliss and beatitude personified —this is ‘it’ and is called Brahm. A person who ‘sees’ this Brahm in his own Atma/soul (or sees his Atma as an image or personification or embodiment of Brahm) is the one who actually and in reality ‘sees’ the sight which is free from all delusions and illusions (60).

61. Oh great sage! This human body is nothing else but a composite cluster or web of different “Naadis” (nerves and veins). It is the Naadi that keeps this gross body intact, for otherwise it would have fallen apart and scattered. This body (which a creature likes to call his ‘identity’) is therefore truthfully meaningless, it lacks substance, essence and truth. Forsake the illusionary conception that it (the human body) is your true identity, and instead use your discriminatory intellect and wisdom to arrive at the real and actual truth, and have firm faith and conviction in it. This faith and conviction in the truth is this—‘I am a personification and an embodiment and an image of the supreme Lord!’ (61).

62. That which—though apparently residing in this body but is in reality completely separate and distinct from it—is great and majestic, stupendous and magnificent as well as is all pervading, omnipresent and immanent Lord of all, is an embodiment of bliss, is eternal, infinite and universal —by recognising and realising the existence of that essential fundamental Truth, a

wise, erudite and potent person can never be subjected to sorrows, anguish, sadness and grief of any kind (62).

63. Oh sage! Who will speak of the imaginary and false differences, or about the duality between the Atma and the Brahm, after his confusions and doubts created by ignorance are dispelled relying on the strength of having acquired the correct knowledge, correct wisdom, correct perception and correct thought about the Truth! (63).

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Canto 5

In this Canto, steps are described about de-clogging and cleaning of the nerves (Naadis) in the body as well as harnessing of the subtle strength and energy present in those nerves.

1. Sankriti asked sage Dattatreya once again, ‘Oh Brahmin! What is the process of purification, cleansing or de-clogging of the Naadis (nerves/veins)? Please tell me about it properly and in very brief so that I can cleanse my Naadis and devote myself to constant meditation and contemplation upon the supreme Truth, and thereby attain emancipation and salvation from this life’ (1).

2. Dattatreya replied, ‘Oh Sankriti! I shall now describe in short the ways to cleanse the Naadis. Whatever has been said and described by the scriptures should be followed with diligence, discipline and commitment in order to attain success. Desire for deriving material benefits or expecting any rewards from such followings should be abandoned because they are counter productive¹ (2).

[Note:- ¹That is, one should follow the guidelines of the scriptures without any expectation of rewards; they should follow them selflessly with faith and conviction. The rewards or benefits which accrue as a result of such following will be there even without asking.]

3. One should adopt the 8 fold path of Yoga such as Yam etc. (see Canto 1, verse nos. 4-6), become calm, serene and tranquil, and follow the path of truthfulness and righteousness. One should constantly, consistently and persistently pursue contemplation upon of the Atma (which is the pure self and pure consciousness). While doing so, one should present oneself in the service of wise, erudite and scholarly persons, serve them and acquire the truthful and complete knowledge about the supreme truth from them (3).

[Note:- ¹That is, one should prevent one’s mind from wandering aimlessly in this artificial world, and instead focus it on that which is not artificial, i.e., on the ultimate truth, the Atma. Naturally, this will calm down the

restlessness of the mind. Then one should serve learned and wise people so that, by their blessings, good virtues can be inculcated.]

4. After that, one should put up a modest dwelling in a peaceful, serene, calm, tranquil, secluded and unpolluted place such as a mountain/hill top, the bank of a river, a place near a 'Vilwa Tree' (the wood apple tree), a lonely dense forest or any other such quiet place, and live there with a peaceful and quiet mind duly focused and devoted to meditation (4).

5. Then the aspirant Yogi should sit there in any of the 'Aasans' (sitting postures), suitable and convenient to him (see Canto 3). He should keep the chin, the head and the body in a normal (erect, straight) position, and sit still (5).

6. One should then visualise that the tip of the nose has the Moon established there. Then he should visualise (in his mind) that there is an 'OM' symbol, which stands for 'Pranav' or the cosmic 'Naad', there, that the 'dot' on that OM symbol is the habitat of the supreme essence or Truth which is, in turn, is the fount or source of 'Amrit', the elixir of bliss and eternity. This 'dot' also represents the 4th state of consciousness called the 'Turiya' which forms the core of this dot, and it is from here that 'Amrit' is dripping out in drops. When this divine esoteric vision unfolds before the eyes of the aspirant Yogi (ascetic), the mind and intellect would be fully engrossed in it, get lost in it, submerged in it and become completely focused on it (6).

7. [In these 4 verses, from 7 to 10, the technique to regulate the breath is being described—] The breath (Pran Vayu) should be inhaled through the 'Eda' nerve (i.e., from the left nostril by closing the right nostril with the thumb) and keep it (the inhaled wind) inside for a while. Then the aspirant should visualise that the fire element present inside his body (i.e., in his abdomen) has been stoked and kindled by this gust of fresh, oxygen rich inhaled air, and consequently, it has leapt up into flames (7).

8. As a next step, he should visualise a union between the 'Bindu' (the "Dot"), the 'Naad' (OM), and the seed/root word of the fire element (which is Rang). The charged and heated inhaled wind should then be exhaled or allowed to pass out through the 'Pingla' nerve (i.e., the right nostril) in a gradual way¹ (8).

[Note:- ¹The inhaled air has been charged with 'static electricity', as it were, when it was heated by the fire element present inside the body with the help of 'ions of Rang'. Any student of high school physics would know how static electricity is produced in air, and how it produces the crackling sound and sparks. Thus, the metaphor of the 'Dot-Bindu', 'Naad' and 'Rang' is actually another way of saying that the inhaled air has been charged, activated and heated. The 'dot' represents the particles of impurities in the body, the 'Naad' is the sound or wind element which moves in waves thereby activating and churning the cool inhaled wind, and the 'rang' is

obviously the heating or fire element. Once heated, it collects the ions of impurities present in the body. And when it is exhaled, it removes those impurities from the body when it goes out.]

9. The same process should be repeated, but this time in the reverse order— inhalation should be through the right nostril and exhalation should be through the left nostril (9).

10. Thus, this process should be done in a lonely and calm place for 2 or 3 days regularly, 3 times a day (morning, noon and evening), and repeated 6 times during each sitting (subject to conditions laid down in the following verse nos. 11-12) (10).

11-12. By this process, the aspirant Yogi's nerves are de-clogged and cleansed. And this fact is physically experienced and witnessed. The body becomes light (i.e., lethargy, laziness, indolence, inertia etc. are removed and the body feels light, active, agile and smart), the fire of hunger is kindled (i.e., the Yogic feels hungry and the dormant hunger is aroused) (11),---

---and one can experience the cosmic 'Naad'. These are the symptoms of success in the aspirant's endeavours. Till the time these three symptoms are not apparent or witnessed, one should continue to persist with the 'breath control exercise' as described in verse nos. 7-10 above (12).

[Note:- The cleaning and detoxification of the Naadis or nerves/veins and the body as a whole takes place because the heated and charged air, while passing out of the nostrils, takes along with it all the impurities or negatively charged ions or particles present in the body much similar to the hot wind kicking up and lifting with it the dust from the ground when it gets heated and turns in swirling circles of whirlwind during summers. Another example is the factory chimney wherein the heated air rises up from the furnace below, carrying aloft with it all the impurities of the work place which, if left un-removed, can cause high pollution inside the factory premises. At the same time, this hot furnace air rising in the chimney also helps in ventilation of the factory shed as cool air from outside is sucked in. All the accumulated trash present in the body is removed, and this decongestion creates a sense of lightness and freshness. This stokes the fire of hunger in the stomach which was hitherto choked with rubbish accumulated in the body. Anyone who has ever stood near a fiercely burning fire would have witnessed a subtle roar of the wind. So, with this decongestion and de-clogging of the inside of the body and the leaping up of the hitherto suppressed flames of hunger indicating restoration of ventilation of the body, the roar of the cosmic wind, called the 'Naad', can be heard by the Yogi. It is a very scientific, rationale and logical approach, and not a set of imaginary hogwash.]

13. Or else, one should keep aside all this, and instead engross or involve himself diligently in purging the Atma of all impurities and faults (स्वात्मशुद्धिं).

This Atma is always pure and eternal, is an embodiment of bliss and happiness, and is self-illuminated and luminescent (13).

14. It appears to be tarnished or dirty or tainted or covered with a layer of impurities (faults, flaws and shortcomings pertaining to delusions and ignorance) only because of one's lack of wisdom. Once wisdom, erudition, awareness of the truth and enlightenment dawns in the aspirant/seeker, the Atma emerges with a shining, glorious, brilliant and radiant purity. A person who washes the muck, slime and dirt of ignorance (Agyan) with the aid of the water of 'Gyan' (wisdom, erudition, truthful knowledge and enlightenment) is said to be most pure and clean. [The Atma does not require any cleaning or washing or purging par se. Any person who realises the basic and inherent nature of the Atma as being pure and clean, is said to be wise and enlightened; he is deemed to have cleansed and purified himself.]

On the contrary, a person who neglects Gyan and keeps himself engrossed in traditional deeds of the world, is deemed to be not pure and not clean; he is deemed to be virtually moribund in this world (14).

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Canto 6

In this Canto, the process of 'Pranayam', its various types, benefits and uses are described.

1. Dattatreya said, 'Oh Sankriti! I shall now describe the process (procedure) of doing 'Pranayam' (breath control) to you. Listen to it with attention. 'Pranayam' has been defined as the control of breath by 3 steps called (i) 'Purak', (ii) 'Kumbhak', and (iii) 'Rechak' respectively (1).

2. The divine word OM has 3 syllables or letters—(A U M) and they are treated as being equivalent to 'Purak', 'Kumbhak' and 'Rechak' process respectively. Since these 3 individual letters or symbols of OM compositely become OM when spoken together, and since they are also equivalent to these 3 steps of 'Pranayam', the latter is also deemed to be symbolic of OM which, in turn, is synonymous with the cosmic 'Naad' and the supreme Brahm (2).

[Note:- Yog Chudamanu Upanishad describes *Pranayam*. The word 'Purak' means to fill the lungs and abdomen with air, the word 'Kumbhak' means a pitcher, and here it means to keep the inhaled air incarcerated or trapped inside the body, and the word 'Rechak' means to purify, wash and clean, to scrub, to wipe, to mop; here it means to clean the body by expelling all the polluted wind laden with impurities present inside the body. See also verse nos. 12-13.]

3. The air (breath) should be slowly inhaled through the 'Eda' nerve (i.e., the left nostril) and incarcerated (trapped) for some time inside the stomach

(abdomen). During this period when the breath is kept trapped inside, the aspirant Yogi should meditate using the 16 'Maatras' (the vowel sounds of the Hindi/Sanskrit alphabets)¹ and concentrate his attention on the first letter 'A' of the word OM. [That is, the inhalation process should be paced so that the time it takes to inhale the wind inside the body will be the same as the time taken to quietly utter or think of the 16 'Maatras' capped by 'A']. This is the 'Purak' part of 'Pranayam' (3).

4. The breath should be kept held up inside the body for a time as long as it takes to mentally repeat the 16 'Maatras' four times and end each round of mental repetition with the word OM. [Therefore, the total number of 'Maatras' remembered mentally becomes $16 \times 4 = 64$ capped by OM] (4).

5. The wind should be held in as long as possible while doing 'Japa' with these vowel sounds (called 'Maatras') and rounded off with OM. This 'holding of the breath inside the body' is called 'Kumbhak' which is symbolic of filling a pot or pitcher according to wise and erudite scholars (5).

6. After that, exhalation should also be a gradual process taking the time which is needed to mentally repeat the 32 'Maatras' topped or capped by OM with an emphasis on the 3rd letter 'M' of the divine word OM. [16 Maatras \times 2 = 32 Maatras] This is called the 'Rechak' phase of 'Pranayam'. The breath should be let out through the 'Pingla' nerve (i.e., through the right nostril). This process is called 'Pranayam'. This should be practiced daily (6).

[Note :- 'The 16 'Maatras' or vowel sounds are the following—A, Aa, E, Ee, U or Oo, Uu or Ooo, Ri, Rii, Ae, Aye, O, Ou, Ang, Aha, Lri, and Lrii.]

7. The above process (of verse nos. 3-6) should be reversed. Inhalation should be done through the 'Pingla' nerve (i.e., right nostril) and the time taken should be the same as taken while inhaling through the left nostril as in verse nos. 3, i.e., the time taken to say 16 'Maatras' topped or capped by the letter 'A' of the divine word OM. The mind should be kept concentrated and focused on OM. [This is the 'Purak' phase] (7).

8. When the stomach is full, expert aspirants should keep the wind inside it while repeating the 'Maatras' 4 times (i.e., a total of $16 \times 4 = 64$ Maatras) capped or topped by the word OM after each cycle of repetition (as done in verse nos. 4). [This is the 'Kumbhak' phase] (8).

9. The exhalation should also be a gradual process as in verse no. 6 and the time taken is also the same—32 'Maatras' capped or topped by OM with an emphasis on the letter 'M' of the divine word OM. A wise person should practice this repeatedly. This is the 'Rechak' phase. (9).

10. Oh the exalted sage! 'Pranayam' should be diligently practiced daily with persistence and discipline. This enables the person to achieve success in

acquiring the truthful knowledge and becoming erudite, wise and realised in a short period of only 6 months (10).

11-12. By practicing 'Pranayam' for one full year according to the process described above (verse nos. 3-9), the seeker/aspirant is able to witness the imperishable Brahm. Hence, it should be diligently and faithfully practiced daily. A person who practices Yoga persistently while going about his designated duties in the world, is able to acquire the truthful life of enlightenment (11)---

---by controlling his vital wind called 'Pran' (by following the process of 'Pranayam'), and consequentially he becomes liberated and delivered from this ocean-like world for good. To pull in air (fresh breath) and fill the stomach (abdomen) with it, is called 'Purak' (literally, to fill, to complete) (12).

13. To keep the stomach (abdomen) full with air like filling a pitcher up to the brim with water, is called 'Kumbhak' (literally the pot or pitcher). The process of gradually exhalation of the withheld wind, is called 'Rechak' (literally the purging, cleansing, purifying, washing) (13).

14-15. [The various categories of 'Pranayam' are being described now—] If the body perspires while doing 'Pranayam', then such a 'Pranayam' is considered to be of the lowest category or quality. If the body shakes or shivers or trembles, it is called a medium quality or category of 'Pranayam'. If the body appears to be lifting upwards (levitating), then it is said to be the best type of 'Pranayam'.

Till the time an aspirant does not experience that the body is levitating or lifting upwards, one must continue to be persistent with the other two types of 'Pranayam' (because constant practice will lead to this best type of 'Pranayam'). When the aforesaid best form of 'Pranayam' is successfully done, the wise person becomes enlightened and is full of bliss. [See also verse no. 43-44.] (14-15).

16. Oh the wise one who is diligent in keeping his vows! The mind-intellect complex of the aspirant becomes cleansed and purified by the help of 'Pranayam' practice, and in the cleansed mind-intellect complex, the light of illumination effusing from the pure Atma or consciousness residing in the bosom of the aspirant is reflected or is witnessed and experienced (16).

17. The 'Pran' or the vital wind of an exalted person who remains steady in The 'Pran' or the vital wind of an exalted person who remains steady in pursuing the process of doing 'Pranayam', joins the mind-intellect complex (i.e., it surrounds or envelops the brain from all the sides like the air covering the earth) and becomes firmly established in the supreme Self (Brahm) symbolically present in the top of the head in the 'Brahm-Randhra

Chakra', resulting in the body gradually and imperceptibly becoming lighter and levitating upwards (17).

18. Consequentially, he attains enlightenment which leads to emancipation. Emphasis should be shifted from inhalation called 'Purak' and exhalation called 'Rechak' to keeping the breath inside for as long a period of time as possible by the aspirant in a state called 'Kumbhak' (18).

[Note:- There is nothing surprising and magical in levitation of the body. Citing the example of a 'hot air balloon' which not only lifts itself but also carries aloft a payload in the form of 1 or 2 passengers and their gear hanging from it in a basket. When the air is kept inside the body, it gets heated due to the body temperature or the 'abdominal fire element'. Hot air is lighter than cold air and therefore it rises up. When the nostrils are closed, that is during the 'Kumbhak' stage, this hot trapped air will have a tendency to lift the body up from the ground because it cannot escape. There is another factor—verse no. 11 says that the practice should be done for one year to achieve success in witnessing Brahm, who is a metaphor for enlightenment. By this time, the aspirant loses flab and become thin and light in weight because of the various restrictions and austere life that he is ordained and expected to follow—see Canto 1, verse nos. 4-5, 19. These two factors—hot air and thin body—together will be responsible for 'lifting of the body'.]

19. By consistently practicing 'Pranayam' as describe above, a Yogi frees himself from all the sins and their cumulative effects, and attains enlightenment. That person conquers his mind and becomes as free and agile as it is. His hairs stop graying and other faults or shortcomings of the body (such as illnesses and other problems) are also taken care of¹ (19).

[Note:- ¹By saying that a person following Yoga practice become free and agile like the mind, it is meant that he acquires the freedom that the mind enjoys to think of anything it wants, to imagine even unimaginable things, to move swiftly from one thought to another in a fraction of a second, to go to places where the physical body cannot reach. That is, the Yogi attains both magical and mystical powers which resemble the stupendous and unhindered powers of the mind.]

20. Nothing is impossible for a man who is steadfast in doing 'Pranayam'. Hence, a man should diligently practice 'Pranayam' (20).

21-22. Oh the wise one who is steadfast in his vows! Now I shall tell you the detailed process of how do to 'Pranayam' for especial effects. During the hours of twilight and the pre-dawn hours (before sun rise) and at noon, or if possible, at any other time (21),---

---the external fresh air should be inhaled inside the stomach. That 'Pran Vayu' or the vital wind sustaining life should be established (held) in

the stomach or abdomen as well as on the tip of the nose, the center of the navel and the big toes of the feet (22).

23. Oh the wise one who is committed to his vows! Such a person is freed from all types of diseases and lives for 100 years. By establishing or concentrating the 'Pran Vayu' (the fresh breath) at the tip of the nose it is possible to conquer (subdue, exert control over and harness) the vital wind. (By saying 'establishing or bearing the wind at the tip of the nose', the sage means that the aspirant Yogi should imagine or visualise that the wind, after being inhaled, is localised at the tip of the nose; it is ready to exit, but is prevented from doing so) (23).

24. Oh noble sage or Brahmin! By holding that wind in the (region of the) navel, all bodily ailments are ameliorated. By focusing it in the big toes of the feet, the body becomes lighter (24).

25. Any person practicing Yoga who always 'drinks' this fresh air through his tongue, becomes free from tiredness and fatigue as well as a burning sensation in the body. He always remains disease free (25).

26. The wind should be pulled in (sucked) through the tongue (that is, it should be slowly sucked through the mouth or the tongue should be held out like done by a dog who absorbs oxygen through his moist tongue) and held at the gullet. The Yogi should imaginatively and symbolically drink the 'Amrit' (the elixir of bliss and eternity) while holding the air there. By doing so, he is able to acquire all sorts of happiness and bliss (26).

[Note:- Sucking and holding the breath in the throat is possible, as many smokers of cigarette do not allow its toxic fumes to go into their lungs but revolve it in the buckle cavity of the mouth before exhaling it through the mouth itself. The chemicals contained in tobacco are dissolved in the mucous linings of the mouth and stimulate the brain without harming the lungs and the wind pipe. In the case of Pranayam, fresh oxygen and other life nourishing elements present in the fresh air are absorbed in the body when the air is held in the mouth after it is sucked slowly through the mouth, gliding over the wet tongue. The wet mucous linings of the tongue and the mouth help in absorbing the essential nutrients of fresh air directly into the blood vessels and this process is synonymous with the drinking of the ambrosia called Amrit by the Yogi.]

27. A person who inhales the wind through the 'Eda' nerve (left nostril) and concentrates it in between his eyebrows, enjoying the bliss obtained by drinking 'Amrit' symbolically, becomes free from all types of diseases (27).

28. Oh the one who is an expert in the basic knowledge of essentials of Vedas! If the breath is pulled in through both 'Eda' and 'Pingla' nerves (i.e., from both the left as well as the right nostrils) and concentrated in the region

of the navel (the central part of the abdomen), then also that person becomes liberated and freed from all diseases (i.e., he becomes healthy) (28).

29-31. For one month, if the breath or fresh air is gradually sucked in through the tongue (i.e. slowly sipped through the mouth) at dawn, noon and twilight hours, imagining that the 'Amrit' is being gradually sucked in (as mentioned in verse no. 27 above), and this breath is kept held in the region of the navel (abdomen) (29),---

---then all diseases originating from misbalance of 'Vaata' and 'Pitta' (i.e. flatulence and bile) are cured or ameliorated without any doubt. If the air is pulled in through the two holes of the nostrils and concentrated in the region of the eyes (30),---

---then all the diseases pertaining to the eyes are eliminated or ameliorated. By keeping the wind trapped in the ears, one can dispel or eliminate all ailments related to the ears (31).

32. Similarly, if the air is pulled in (inhaled) and localised or focused in the head region, then the diseases related to the head are cured. Oh Sankriti! I have told you the truth. The aspirant Yogi should sit in a 'Swastika' posture with a focused mind (32).

33. While repeating the divine 'Mantra' OM, he should gradually lift (divert) the 'Apan Vayu' upwards. [This wind is present in the intestine and it normally moves downwards instead of going upwards.] The ears and other such holes present in the body (e.g., nose, ears, eyes etc.) should be firmly closed by pressing them with the help of the fingers of the hands (33).

34. The ears should be closed (covered) with the thumbs, the eyes should be closed (covered) by the first (index) fingers, while both the holes of the nostrils should be closed (covered) by two fingers each (34).

35. In this way, all the organs in the upper part of the body should be closed (covered), and the wind held in the head till the time the elixir of bliss (called 'Amrit') manifests/reveals itself. Oh great sage! By this process, the 'Pran Vayu' (the vital wind sustaining life; the breath which has been inhaled and concentrated in the head) enters the 'Brahm-Randhra' in the head (35).

[Note:- Verse no. 32 tells us that if the breath is focused in the head, it cures head ailments. Verse no. 35 tells us that if this 'Pran Vayu', mixed with the 'Apan Vayu', enters the head, it goes straight up to the subtle energy center present at the top of the head. 'Brahm-Randhra' refers to the pin-head sized aperture present in the skull through which the trapped wind finally manages to escape in the vast sky beyond. When this happens, it is said that the macrocosmic soul (the 'Pran Vayu') has merged or coalesced with the macrocosmic Soul (Vast sky pervaded by Vayu or the wind/air element which is synonymous with Brahman). But before the exit, when the wind is circulating in the area, it gives a sense of eternal bliss and happiness to the

Yogi/ascetic. Probably it is because all the important sensory nerves are located in the upper part of the brain which becomes titillated by the presence of the 'Pran' as well as the 'Apan Vayu' there.]

36. Oh 'Anagh' (literally meaning the one who is pure, uncorrupt and sinless; here the word refers to sage Sankriti)! When the 'Pran Vayu' enters the 'Brahm-Randhra Chakra' (see verse no. 35, note), the Yogi hears the deep sound of a conch being blown in the beginning of his Yogic (meditation exercise) practices. This sound, which is the cosmic 'Naad', transforms itself gradually into the sound resembling the rumbling or thundering of clouds every now and then at intervals (36).

37. When the wind becomes firmly established in the center of the head (or skull), at that time the sound resembles the rippling sound of water falling as a waterfall from a mountain.

Oh the most erudite and wise sage! After that, the Yogi (ascetic) experiences extreme bliss and witnesses or experiences the presence of the 'Atma' (which is pure consciousness residing in his bosom) (37).

38. After that, one comes to realise (i.e., witness and experience) the essential truth of the element called 'Atma', and all the worldly fetters are consequentially completely destroyed.

(Now the sage describes another method to control the 'Pran Vayu' or breath or the vital wind which sustain life—) The part of the body which is present at the junction point of the anus and the genitals is the 'southern most point' of the body, and it is called 'Siwani'. [The word 'Siwani' means a 'suture' and it is called so because it sews the two parts of the body, the left half and the right half, together at that point.] (38).

39. An erudite and wise person should sit in a kneeled-down posture, with legs folded in and this 'Siwani' pressed down upon the two ankles of the two folded legs. Then he should imagine and meditate upon the Lord called 'Triyambak' while sitting in this posture (39).

[Note:- This process has also been described with slight variation in Yogchudami Upanishad, verse nos. 46 and 114.]

40. Then one should deeply contemplate upon Lord Ganesh (known as "Vinaayak" also) and the Goddess of speech, i.e., Saraswati (also known as "Vaagishwari"). Oh sage! After that, the Yogi should pull in the wind (fresh air) through the opening of the penis (40).

41-42. While doing so, all the while he should repeat the divine Mantra pertaining to 'Pranav', i.e., OM, and focus the vital wind (or incarcerate it, or trap it, or localise it) in the center of the 'Muladhar Chakra'. Oh the intelligent and exalted sage! (41).---

---The subtle fire located here (in the 'Muladhar Chakra') is kindled or ignited by this fresh (oxygen laden) air inhaled as mentioned above, and this fire then rises up the 'Kundalini'. The heated air, charged with the energy of the fire, enters the 'Sushumna' nerve and it snakes up through it towards the top of the head (42).

43-44. Oh exalted sage! By regularly exercising in this way, one can eventually establish his control over the vital wind forces of life. In the beginning there is profuse sweating; this is followed by the trembling of the body (43),---

---and finally it appears that the body is lifting up (or levitating)—all theses are indications of victory over the vital winds of the body. All the diseases of the body of a person who practices these Yoga (meditation) exercises are eliminated. [See also verse no. 14-15 in this context.] (44)

45. Oh Sankriti! By this means of controlling of the vital winds, diseases such as fistula and other such diseases (of the anus and alimentary canal etc.) are cured, big and small sins (misdeeds) and their effects are also eliminated or destroyed (45).

46. When this happens and all the corrupting influences that tarnish the mind are removed, the mind-intellect complex becomes clean and clear as a mirror and also becomes pristine pure. This results in generation of total dispassion and disinterest towards all the myriad comforts, enjoyments and other allurements or attractions of the materialistic but artificial and mortal world, and even for those of the celestial and heavenly immortal worlds which are the abodes of Brahma (the creator) as well as of all other Gods (46).

[Note:- When the mind-intellect complex is cleansed and purged of all the dust and slime symbolising perversions and evil thoughts which act as a dirty and dark layer on the mind-intellect complex of a creature, then it shines like a 'cleaned mirror', and like a mirror, it reflects the image of the 'Reality and Truth' which is the 'Atma' or pure-self or pure consciousness of the creature. This 'Atma' is, in itself, an image of its macrocosmic counterpart, the Brahm. This divine, sublime and eclectic view of the absolute truth and ultimate reality removes all delusions and doubts from the mind of the Yogi seeker/aspirant that comes face-to-face with the reality and truth. Then he realises the falsehood and futility of worldly pursuits and, once having tasted the juicy nectar of the supreme eclectic essence, he is no more enticed or lured by or interested in the false liquid which he had hitherto been erroneously regarding as the truth, but now realises to be nothing but a deluding and hallucinating mirage-like liquid masquerading as 'Amrit', the elixir of eternity and bliss. This causes total renunciation, disinterest, disenchantment and dispassion towards the world. The Yogi, once having drunk the actual liquid called 'Amrit', shuns other false liquids which call themselves 'Amrit' but are actually the opposite of it.]

47. A person who becomes dispassionate towards and totally disinterested in this world after having realised the truth of Brahm and falsehood of the

world, is able to attain Gyan (wisdom, truthful knowledge about the reality, enlightenment and erudition) which leads him to 'Kaivalya Moksha', or the state of non-duality between the Atma of the Yogi and the supreme Brahm, as a result of which he finds complete and truthful liberation from the fetters that tie him to this mundane and artificial world, and he is able to deliver his soul in the sense that it merges with its primary source, the Brahm. This Brahm is the supreme Lord who is eternal, auspicious and truthful. With the help of this truthful knowledge and awareness of the eternal truth, all types of fetters are removed and all sorts of ties are broken from their roots (i.e., they are completely routed and eliminated for good) (47).

48. A person who has once tasted the divine, supreme, esoteric, eclectic and sublime taste of this divine nectar of Gyan, becomes so intoxicated by its charms and taste that he goes pursuing it like a man in trance who abandons all other work in this world and follows the source of the magical spell which is cast upon him and which seems to completely overwhelm his being and hold him in thrall (48).

49. Wise and erudite persons call and look at this world as an image or personification of Gyan. [That is, they look at this world with the eyes of wisdom, erudition and deep insight. Whatever they see or observe is filtered in their intellect, and they learn a lesson from each view, from each sight, from each perception, from each experience. They judge for themselves what is true and what is merely a deception. That is why such people call the world a 'classroom of Gyan'.]

On the contrary, those whose eyes of wisdom are corrupted or veiled in cataract of ignorance and their mind is pervert and deluded, such persons see and perceive this world as a source of material comfort and enjoyment, as a source of sensual pleasure and gratification (49).

50. With a comprehensive and integrated knowledge of the essential truth about the Atma, the deluding darkness of ignorance (called Agyan) is dispelled or removed. When delusions and ignorance are removed, their accompanying evils such as 'Raag and Dwesh' (i.e., various attachments, attractions, infatuations as well as ill-will, malice, spite, jealousy and envy etc.) are also removed or destroyed (50).

51. When everything else is removed, the demarcation between what is good and what is not (literally, 'Punya and Paap' respectively) is also erased. When this distinction between 'Paap' and 'Punya' is removed, the Yogi becomes even and equanimous, tranquil and serene, sedate and calm. As a result, such an enlightened person ("Pragya") does not have to wear (or acquire) a gross body again (i.e., he does not have to take birth again). [That is, he obtains the ultimate emancipation and deliverance and the final salvation of his soul by getting it merged with the supreme soul of the

cosmos, a stage of attainment which has been defined as ‘Kaivalya Moksha’ or literally, ‘the only truthful salvation’ in verse no. 47.] (51)

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Canto 7

In this Canto, the concept of ‘Pratyahar’ (pronounced as “Pratyaahaar”), which literally means ‘self-restraint’, is being described.

1. Oh great sage! Now I shall describe ‘Pratyahar’ (self-restraint) to you. The sense organs have a natural tendency to be enticed or lured by the various material objects of sensual gratification in this surrounding world; they have a mutual affinity or attraction towards each other (1).

2. The effort to forcefully, willingly, diligently and with commitment pull the sense organs away from their natural comfort zones in the world (i.e., to exercise self-restraint over them and prevent the sense organs of the body from gravitating towards the objects of the world which pull them continuously and relentlessly towards themselves) is defined as ‘Pratyahar’. ‘Whatever a person sees is nothing else but Brahm’ (2)—firm conviction in this principle and putting the restless mind under a tight leash, is also called ‘Pratyahar’. This is what those who are experts in the knowledge of the essentials of Brahm assert.

3-4. Whatever good or bad deeds a man does in his life time till the time of his death (3)---

---should be offered to the supreme Lord —this is also defined as a form of ‘Pratyahar’.

[That is, non-involvement in deeds and actions, or doing them with complete, sincere and honest detachment and without any expectation of any reward or having any fear of punishment, is also called ‘Pratyahar’.]

In other words, all the daily routine chores of this mundane world should be done with complete selflessness, a sense of honest service, total detachment and sincere humility, and they should be treated as an offering made to the supreme Lord (4).

5. Doing one’s duty (and treating it as a form of worship of the Lord) is also a type of ‘Pratyahar’. [Now, the Yoga practice of ‘controlling of the vital wind’ is being described as another form of ‘Pratyahar’ or self restraint—] The wind should be pulled from one place or point and established at another (5).

6-7. This is how it should be done—the wind (‘Pran Vayu’ or the fresh air or breath) should be sucked in through the teeth (or the cavity of the mouth surrounded or walled on all sides by the row of teeth; here, it simply means

through the mouth while the teeth are clenched and the lips are open as opposed to the posture when the mouth is wide open) and localised or established or focused or trapped or incarcerated in the region of the throat. It should then sequentially be moved down step by step as follows—from the throat to the region of the heart (chest), then pulled away from the region of the heart and sent to the area around the navel (abdomen) (6),---

---then from here it should be shifted downwards to the 'Kundalini' (located at the base of the spine), and an expert practitioner should then transfer this wind to the 'Muladhar Chakra' (7).

8. After that, the vital wind present in the anus and rectum, called the 'Apaan Vayu', should be removed from its normal habitat (location) and shifted to the two sides of the hip-region (the pelvic girdle) and from there to the center of the two thighs. From here it should be progressively transferred to the knees, from the knees to the calves, from there to the big toes of the feet, and established there (8).

9. Experts in Yoga exercises have described the above process of controlling the two vital winds (the 'Pran and the Apaan Vayus') and finally mixing them and focusing them in the toe as 'Pratyahar'. [The vital wind that is present in the legs is known as Udaan. See canto 4, verse no. 29.] (9).

10. For a person who makes diligent and sincere efforts to follow the process prescribed to do 'Pratyahar' (as described in the above verses), all his sins and miseries taking the form of repeated births and deaths (and their accompanying cycle of endless torments and troubles) are eliminated or dispelled on their own.

[Now, another Yoga exercise is described to accomplish 'Pratyahar'—] The wise and erudite aspirant should sit calmly in a 'Swastik' posture¹ (10).

[Note:- ¹The *Swastik* posture mentioned in verse no. 10 is the following— The person should sit cross-legged in such a way that the left foot rests on the center of the right thigh and the right foot rests on the left thigh. The rest of the body—abdomen, neck, head etc.—should be held straight, and the hands should rest on top of the knees. See canto 3, verse no. 1-3.]

11-12. The 'Pran Vayu' should be drawn in through the nostril and the whole body—from the legs right up to the head—should be filled with it. It should be established in both the legs, in the 'Muladhar Chakra' (the subtle energy center located between the genitals and the anus) (11),---

---the navel region of the abdomen, the center of the heart (the chest region), the base of the throat, the gullet and the palate, the center of the two eyebrows and the root of the nose, the forehead and finally the head—the wind should be established in all these locations. [This is called the Samaan Vayu. See canto 4, verse no. 29.] (12)

13. A wise, erudite and expert person should pacify his mind (i.e., remove all its restlessness and calm it down) and detach or de-link it from the gross body. [That is, he should realise that his true self is the 'Atma' and it is separate from the body; they are two independent and distinct entities.]

With this realisation, he should focus the mind and firmly establish it in the truthful entity called the Atma', without having any confusions or doubts in the mind that this is the only and truthful alternative. Or, in other words, that the Atma is the only truthful form of existence, while the other alternative, the body, is utterly and completely gross, base and false (13).

14. Those wise ones who are well versed in the essence of the knowledge of Vedanta, have called this awareness or realisation as the actual form of 'Pratyahar', or the ultimate aim of self-restraint. Nothing is inaccessible for a person who practices 'Pratyahar' in the above manner because he is endowed with stupendous mystical powers (14).

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Canto 8

'Dhaarna'—literally meaning firm belief and conviction, a firm resolution about the fundamental truth that the vast macrocosm is present in the basic five elements of Nature, which are earth, water, fire, wind and space—is being described in this canto.

1. Oh the one who diligently follows the righteous path! Now I shall describe to you what is meant by 'Panch Dhaarna'. [The word 'Panch' means 'five', and the word 'Dhaarna' means 'belief, faith, imagination, thinking, conviction, resolution, perception and view'.]

The 'sky element' present in the body should be visualised as being similar to the vast space present outside the body (1).

2. Similarly, one should imagine that the vital wind called 'Pran' in the body is the same as the wind present outside the body in the vast space of the sky. The heat present in the stomach (abdomen) is the 'fire element' of the cosmos, the fluid portion of the body is akin to the 'water element' of the world, and the gross form of the body (skin, bone, hair, teeth, nail) is nothing else but the 'earth or soil' in its entirety (2).

3. While one contemplates and ponders deeply on this fact, i.e., while one imagines that, for example, the 'breath that he inhales or exhales is nothing but the universal wind element that is present in the vast sky that fills the entire creation' and so on and so forth, he should pronounce the relevant seed or root word for that element¹. This sort of imagination or contemplation upon the 5 elements of Nature by using their respective seed words is

considered the best form of 'Dhaarna'. This process has the potential to destroy and eliminate all the sins and their cumulative effects (3).

[Note:- ¹The seed or root of the words for the 5 basic elements of creation are the following— (i) 'hum or hung' for the space/sky element; (ii) 'yung or yum' for the wind/air element; (iii) 'rung or rum' for the fire element; (iv) 'vum or vung' for the water element; and (v) 'lung or lum' for the earth element.]

4-6. The part of the body from foot to the knee is regarded as the earth element; from the knee to the anus is considered as the water element; from the anus to the heart (chest) is regarded as the fire element (4);---

---from the heart right up to the middle point of the two eyebrows is determined to be the wind element; and the area of the head/skull is the space or the sky element.

Oh the enlightened and wise one! One should imagine and contemplate that Brahma, the creator, resides (or pervades) in the earth element, Vishnu, the sustainer, in the water element (5),---

---Shiva, the destroyer, in the fire element, Ishwar (the all-pervading, almighty supreme macrocosmic causal body of the Lord) in the wind element, and the Truth known as 'Sada Shiv' that is infinite, eternal, universal, blissful, auspicious, esoteric and supreme in the sky/space element (6).

[Note:- Basically, this Canto establishes a direct equation between the microcosm and the macrocosm. It essentially tells us that what we see at the macro level as an individual creature's body is the same as the vast macrocosmic form of the Lord called the 'Viraat Purush' revealed in the form of Nature and cosmos.]

7. Oh exalted sage! I shall now tell you another way of looking at the truth with a firm conviction. A wise person should be firm and steadfast in his belief that the supreme, enlightened, blissful, auspicious, imperishable and universally truthful Lord is present in the bosom (heart) of the individual himself (7).

8. Such a firm faith that the Lord resides in my bosom is able to destroy or eliminate or overcome all the sins, misdeeds and evils. [See canto 4, verse nos. 48-63.]

The aspirant Yogi should remove the distinction between various manifestations of that supreme and immutable Lord in the form of Brahma the creator of the visible world etc. (i.e. as Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder of this world) by dissolving or merging all these myriad forms into their original and primary form called the Brahm (8).

9. This entity called Brahm is the cause of everything, is un-manifest, attribute-less, indescribable and incomprehensible. The aspirant should establish that supreme Soul (Brahm or Pranav) in his own soul or Atma. [That is, he should firmly belief that his Atma is the seat of the supreme

Lord, that his microcosmic pure-self is the habitat of the vast macrocosmic supreme Self. There is 'non-duality' between them. They are the one and the same.]

With this firmness and steadfastness of conviction and faith, he should assiduously fix his attention (mind and intellect) on the 'Pranav' or the sublime and supreme Lord as a wholesome and complete entity. Alongside this, he should simultaneously use his will power and discriminatory intellect to remove his sense organs away from their respective perceptions pertaining to the world and their respective desires for gratifications. Instead of it, the mind should be fixed on the Atma or soul. [That is, the aspirant should endeavour to remove the mind from or train it to stop receiving any stimuli or impulses from the outside world through the medium of the organs of perceptions such as the ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin, and instead divert its attentions and focus it towards the Atma which is the pure-self of the aspirant and which is the truthful form of pure consciousness] (9) [7-9].

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Canto 9

The two ways of 'Dhyan' (pronounced as "Dhyaan": meaning broadly contemplation and meditation, or the fixing of the attention on any object, or remembrance and deep thought of anything) are being described in this Canto.

1-2. Now I shall describe to you the contemplation or the deep-thought process which gives insight into the essentials of the ultimate Truth and Reality as well as of the fetters that tie a creature to the world of ignorance. This 'Dhyan' or deep concentration of the mind on the real facts of existence can destroy all the shackles pertaining to the entrapping, illusionary and deluding mundane world. This 'Dhyan' is like a medicine for all the ailments pertaining to this artificial, mortal and mundane world. One should contemplate upon the supreme, transcendental Brahm who is 'Rit' (honest, honoured, revered, worthy and righteous), is 'Satya' (i.e., truthful and real), is 'Urdhva Reta' (i.e., one who is the most exalted and resides high above; it is a metaphor for one who is noble and great, spiritually exalted, ethereal and eclectic), has 'stern and penetrating eyes' (i.e., who cannot be cheated, mislead, deceived and be subject to deceit and conceit), who is 'an image of the vast universe' (i.e., is macrocosmic, all-pervading, immanent, omnipresent and all-encompassing) and who is 'the great Lord of all the Gods', i.e., he is the supreme Authority called Maheshwar. Such an exalted, supreme and revered Brahm should be thought of as having his image in the pure-self or Atma of the individual. That is, the seeker or aspirant must concentrate his thoughts on the fact that his Atma and Brahm are one and the same. This fact should be firmly entrenched and established in his mind-intellect complex. This is the 'Dhyan' of the supreme Lord which a Yogic

(ascetic) should endeavour to do with due diligence, sincerity and commitment (1-2).

3-5. There is another way of thinking about Brahm. One should deeply contemplate on the fact that ‘He—who is an embodiment of truth, is the Lord of all creation, is eclectic and ethereal, is enlightenment and wisdom personified, is an image of bliss, happiness and tranquillity, is unique and beautiful, is most auspicious, pure and incorrupt, is eternal and infinite, is without a beginning, a middle and an end (3),---

---is beyond the delusions and ignorance created by this gross, temporal, artificial world, is distinct from the sky element (but pervades the sky), is stronger than the wind that can be felt (i.e., his presence is more subtle and sublime than the existence of the wind which cannot be seen but can be proved to be present by the sense of touch only), is distinct from the fire element which can be actually seen by the eyes, is more mysterious and majestic, wonderful and fascinating, powerful and stupendous than the water element which can be physically tasted as well as the earth element from which emanates various hues of smell, odours and fragrances which can be physically smelt, who cannot be understood, comprehended or witnessed with the aid or help of visual or physical proofs (as is the case with wind, fire, water, earth) (4),---

---who is without a match, is unique and the only one of his kind, who is beyond the concept of a physical body (i.e., who cannot be reached by this gross body of a creature and who has no physical body of his own), who is pure and truthful consciousness, pure bliss, immutable, indistinguishable, supreme and transcendental—such an entity with all these attributes and virtues is called Brahm.

The seeker/aspirant Yogi should think that his Atma is nothing else but this Brahm with the characteristics described above.

Firm conviction and belief, diligent and honest pursuit of this righteous and auspicious way of thinking, and ever remaining steadfast in such thoughts and beliefs that ‘the supreme Brahm is non other than my pure self’, is a way to attain liberation and deliverance from this world. It provides emancipation, deliverance and salvation of the soul of the individual (5).

6. A wise and erudite person who remains engrossed in practicing such rightful and auspicious thinking and contemplation is surely able to acquire special and expert knowledge about the truthful reality of Brahm as described in Vedantic treatises (Upanishads)—there is no doubt about it (6).

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Canto 10

This Canto describes the concept of ‘Samadhi’ (pronounced as “Samaadhi”), which is a transcendental state of existence of consciousness that is

experienced by Yogis when they are successful in practicing Yoga. It is a state marked by extreme bliss and a feeling of oneness with Brahm; it makes the practitioner feel the vastness and the infinity associated with the concept of Brahm and its synonym known as the Atma—because in the state of Samadhi the practitioner of Yoga freed from the fetters of his gross body and enjoys his association with the pure consciousness that resides inside his subtle body as his Atma. In other words, the state of Samadhi brings the practitioner of Yoga as nearest to Brahm as is possible with his gross body, and he begins to revel in this experience so much so that he would never have any desire left in him to revert to the gross body or the gross world. This Canto is the climax or a citadel of Vedantic philosophy pertaining to Yoga.

1. Now I shall describe to you the concept of ‘Samadhi’ (the trance like state) which can destroy or eliminate all ties that shackles a creature to this mundane, gross and entrapping world. It is defined as ‘the revelation of oneness between the Atma of the creature and the supreme Atma of the cosmos’ (1).

2. Atma is imperishable, eternal and infinite, all pervading and immanent, immutable and uniform, and without any fault or blemishes of any kind. Though it is immutable and one, it is out of delusions created by ignorance that it appears to take myriad forms of different contours, shapes and sizes, having separate and distinct identities. But all this is merely an illusion. The fact is that there is no distinction between any of these forms (because the same Atma has revealed itself in all these myriad different forms) (2).

3-4. This is the reason why ‘non-duality’ is an established and irrefutable truth and an established fact. There is no such thing as ‘delusions’ or ‘a world’ (because they are based on ignorance). Just like the same sky has different names as ‘Ghatakash’ and ‘Mathakash’ (literally meaning ‘the space inside an empty pot’ and ‘the space inside a large abbey’ respectively) (3),---

---ignorant and foolish people, out of their ignorance and foolishness, illusionary and erroneous conceptions and their stupidity, treat the same non-dual supreme Lord as being two distinct entities, such as the creature or ‘Jiva’ and the God, or the Atma of the creature and the supreme Atma of the cosmos called ‘Parmatma’ separately. [This latter concept is called ‘duality’ which is contradictory to the established fact that the Atma of an individual creature and the supreme Atma of the cosmos are one and the same and are distinguishable from one another, a concept called ‘non-duality’ which is the truth propounded and expounded by the Upanishads.]

I am not the gross body, and neither am I the ‘Pran’, nor a collection of the sense organs or the mind and heart (4).

5. My true identity is established in the eternal blissful state of the Supreme Essence (i.e., the Atma) which is only a neutral witness and an observer to everything around it.

Oh the best amongst sages! To be in such a state of clear understanding, having firm conviction, having a doubtless mind which is free from all confusions and delusions, is called 'Samadhi' (5).

6-7. I am that supreme Lord who is known by the name of 'Brahm'. I am not an ordinary mortal creature who is trapped or deluded by the delusions and misconceptions created by the world. Hence, nothing has ever existed in any dimensions of time (past, present, future) that is separate or distinct or different or independent from me. [That is, I was virtually present in the past, am present now, and shall be present in the future as well.]

Even as foam and waves etc. emerge from the surface of an ocean and eventually disappear into it once again (6),---

---this world also emerges from me and falls back or disappears or merges back into me. Hence, the 'Mana' (the mind, intellect and heart), which is the cause of all the creation and the existence of this world, also has no separate existence besides me. Likewise, this artificial world and the 'Maya' (delusions and ignorance)¹ associated with it too has no independent existence that is distinct from me.

[Here, the Yogi or ascetic is treating himself as an enlightenment Being, and not as an ordinary mortal human being, because all the characteristics described in these verses belong to the supreme, all pervading, macrocosmic Brahm] (7).

[Note:- ¹Maya is a word which has two parts, Ma + Ya. The first half 'Ma' means 'to measure, mark off, by any standard; to show, to exhibit, to display; to infer, to conclude; to be formed, built, made of', while the second part 'Ya' means 'this or that'. Therefore the composite word Maya means neither this nor that; anything that is not real; that which is delusionary, illusionary, deceptive, mirage like and deceitful, and is caused by the ignorance about its truth and reality; something that has no substance or pith; displays no certainty and leads to wrong inference. The term Maya is used to define all these phenomenons. Hence, Maya is a synonym used for all that is deceptive, faulty, false, deluding, based on ignorance, is illusionary, and is deceitful. Maya in brief is all that which has no reality or substance; all that is hollow.

Maya has 3 basic constituent qualities. Hence it is called 'Trigunmayi', i.e., one which has the 3 Gunas or qualities. These 3 Gunas or qualities are—Sat, Raj and Tam. 'Sat' is the most auspicious, virtuous and noblest quality in a man and raises him to a high moral and spiritual pedestal. It marks predominance of righteousness and the highest standards of spirituals and mental evolvment leading to high thoughts, noble actions and righteous behaviour. 'Raj' is the medium quality in a person, and it is marked by worldly passions, desires, yearnings and greed. It makes a man more worldly than spiritual. 'Tam' is the third and most lowly of the three qualities and is used has a synonym for darkness and evil. Obviously, 'Tam' means ignorance, delusions and all the forces or qualities that are evil, mean,

lowly, miserly, wicked and base. They pull down a man from high pedestal and virtually dump him in the dust yard of creation to rust and decay.

These 3 qualities together, in various permutations and combinations, decide the innate nature of a man. The greater presence of 'Sat' makes a man nobler as compared to a high ratio of 'Tam' which makes him wicked, pervert and evil. Various proportions of these qualities will therefore produce innumerable varieties of creatures having different temperaments, thought processes, behaviours, demeanours and mental setup in this world. See also the following Upanishads of the Sam Veda: (i) Chandogyopanishad, canto 7, section 16, verse no. 1; (ii) Maitrayanyu-panishad, canto 4, verse no. 3; (iii) Maitrayeu-panishad, canto 2, verse no. 25; (iv) Mahopanishad, canto 5, verse no. 111; (v) Sanyaso-panishad, canto 2, verse no. 20; (vi) Avyakto-panishad, verse no. 1; and (vii) Kundiko-panishad, verse no. 14.]

8. In this way, a person who begins to acknowledge, experience and witness the supreme Soul (Lord, Brahm) in his own soul (the Atma) is able to attain the supreme, ethereal, sublime and transcendental stature which is equivalent to the supreme Brahm personified, and which resembles the nectar of eternity and bliss that is called 'Amrit' (8).

9. When the Yogi (ascetic) begins to subtly experience and witness the eternal, immanent, all pervading, supreme and transcendental pure Consciousness in his mind-intellect-heart complex called the 'Mana', then at that time he finds himself rooted or firmly established in that supreme state of consciousness on his own (i.e., without any special efforts or prodding to feel such an elevated stature) (9).

10. When that Yogi sees all the mortal creatures as being present in subtle forms in his own self and, at the same time, sees himself as being subtly present or revealed in all of them, then at that time he becomes a true personification of Brahm. [That is, a real wise and truly enlightened Yogi is one who sees no distinction between any two individuals as well as between himself and others] (10).

11. When a person in 'Samadhi' attains oneness between his microcosmic Atma (self) and the macrocosmic Atma (the supreme Self or Brahm), he does not see any distinction between himself and the other creatures. This establishes him in the only one state of existence called 'non-duality' which is universal and supreme in nature and essence (11).

12. When he sees his Atma as the only eclectic, ethereal, supreme, sublime and transcendental Truth and absolute Realty, and the visible world as nothing else but an extension of 'Maya' (or of delusions and ignorance), then he obtains supreme bliss and beatitude' (12).

13. In this way, the great and enlightened Lord Dattatreya gave his discourse and fell silent. Sage Sankriti enshrined that knowledge in his heart and became fearless. Having realized his true nature (i.e., having understood the true nature of the pure self, which is the Atma), he spent his time happily and blissfully thereafter (13).

Thus ends the excellent Upanishad known by the name of “Jabal Darshan Upanishad”. Amen!

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SECTION 3

UPANISHADS OF THE SHUKLA YAJUR VEDA

Shantipaath of the Upanishads of the Shukla Yajur Veda: ‘OM salutations! The supreme Lord, who is represented by the cosmic and divine word symbol OM, is complete and absolute in all respects. This whole cosmos is wholly and completely encompassed and pervaded by him (i.e. the supreme Brahm uniformly pervades in this whole creation even as water is uniformly present in wet sponge). This whole world, with its myriad forms, has originated from that one, single, immutable, whole, complete and indivisible entity. In spite of this, that whole, complete and indivisible entity (Brahm) remains as such, that is, one, single, immutable, whole, complete and indivisible. [That is, in spite of this world coming into being from it, that whole entity is not diminished even a bit.] Even when he is hypothetically separated from this creation, he still remains whole, complete and indivisible. [That is, Brahm cannot be partitioned or fractured or divided in any way. Whether he is treated as a separate entity or as an integral part of the cosmos, his form and nature remains essentially the same; he is unique in this aspect. This is a reference to the non-dual nature of the supreme Brahm.] OM! Let there be peace for us; let there be peace for us; let there be peace for us! [That is, let our three torments, called the Traitaps, be calmed down. The so-called Traitaps are the torments that the creature is subjected to due to his body such as illness, old age etc; due to other worldly creatures such as fear from the king, thieves etc.; and due to the malignant stars and opposed Gods.]’

This section has the following four Upanishads of the Shukla Yajur Veda that deal with the theme of Yoga: (III—A) Advaya Tarak Upanishad; (III—B) Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad; (III—C) Mandal Brahmin Upanishad; and (III—D) Hansa Upanishad.

(III—A) Advaya Tarak Upanishad

As the name suggests, this Upanishad elucidates about the ‘Advai’ Brahm, i.e. that Brahm which is non-dual, and at the same time is ‘Tarak’ Brahm, i.e. that Brahm which provides liberation and deliverance to the spiritual aspirant. It describes in detail the form of meditation called ‘Tarak Yog’.

The word ‘Tarak’ means to cause or enable to pass or cross over, to carry over, one that rescues, provides relief and succour, one that can provide liberation and deliverance to the creature from any bondage, while ‘Advai’ means that which has no duality and is one single immutable whole. ‘Brahm’ of course refers to the supreme transcendental cosmic Authority in creation who is not only the very cause of the coming into being of this whole creation as it is witnessed all around, but also of its sustenance,

development and its final conclusion when its time is up; Brahm is the object of all spiritual research and pursuits. Finally, 'Yoga' is a word which generally refers to meditation but more technically it implies a union between two entities, and here it implies that form of meditation which can bring about the union between the individual creature's soul and the supreme transcendental cosmic and universal Soul of the creation. In other words, this Upanishad shows the path of Yoga that culminates in self-realisation by the ascetic, and his getting acquainted with the ultimate truth about his own self known as the and the primary source of creation, i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm, as being two sides of the same coin.

Here emphasis is laid on harnessing the powers of the mind to enable the aspirant to witness the supreme truth or Brahm which is conceived as 'light' (verse no. 13). There are three ways to 'see' that Brahm—one is the internal vision (verse no. 5), the second is the external vision (verse no. 6), and the third is the median vision (verse no. 7). It goes on to describe how these three visions should be integrated to enable one to witness Brahm, i.e. to practice the 'Tarak Yoga'. The aspirant is advised to seek the guidance of a spiritual teacher and guide, and the qualities of such a person are also enumerated (verse no.14-18). Finally, the benefits of studying the Upanishad are mentioned too (in verse no. 19).

This Upanishad describes, inter alia, the two symbolic forms of the 'Tarak' and the two phases of doing meditation with this concept of Tarak (verse no. 8-11).

Further, the word Tarak also refers to the 'eye of wisdom that liberates one from the darkness of ignorance and delusions', and it has relevance here because meditation leads to the opening of the inner 'eye' of insight that leads to self realisation and enlightenment. There are various Upanishads dealing with this aspect of meditation and spiritual deliverance, and besides this Upanishad the other major text on this subject belonging to the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition is the Tarak Upanishad. 'Tarak' also means a meter of 4 x 13 syllables; hence it refers also to the various Mantras used for the purpose of meditation.

The subject matter covered in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad is very similar to this Upanishad in terms of its tenor and scope of metaphysical concepts covered, and should be used to supplement and compliment each other. There are slight variations though, but it is because different seers and sages had different personal experiences of the same universal Truth (about Brahm and Atma), and therefore they did not hesitate to put forth the Truth as they had witnessed, experienced or realised it themselves first hand. Then of course there was the problem of the verbal transfer of this knowledge of the Truth from the teacher to his disciple, and then further down the line, necessitating the need of language and words and reliance on memory, which in turn had their own lot of limitations and problems, such as different interpretations and varying use of words. Each individual teacher explained his own experience in his own way, and since there was no standard reference printed books in those times to be mass taught and read, each Upanishad acquired uniqueness, because though they speak about the same universal Truth, the language, the format and style used are different from one to another.

1. Now the Upanishad called Advai Tarak is being elucidated for the benefit of Yogis (ascetics), Sanyasis (renunciate wondering mendicants, friars, monks, hermits) and

Jitendriyas (those who have self restraint over their sense organs), as well as those who possess the so-called six Gunas or virtuous qualities¹ such as Sham (restraint, peace, tranquility, quietness, suppression of desires, yearnings and natural instincts and impulses) and Dam (tolerance and fortitude) (1).

[Note—¹The *six Gunas* or noble qualities are the following—(i) Sham (having self restraint and control; having peace, tranquility, serenity and quietness; being able to suppress desires, yearnings and natural instincts and impulses); Dam (tolerance, forbearance, fortitude); (iii) Upriti (renunciation, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement); (iv) Titksha (endurance, patience, fortitude, sufferance, equanimity); (v) Samadhan (solution, answer, lack of confusion or doubts, clarity of thoughts and conception); and (vi) Shraddha (having faith, belief, conviction, reverence and devotion).]

2. Such a spiritual aspirant/seeker concentrates/focuses his attention on the point just above the middle of the two eyebrows by either closing the eyes fully in concentration, or keeping them half closed.

[That is, it does not matter whether the eyes are opened or closed, but his attention should be fixed on this spot where the Bhru Chakra or Agya Chakra is located. This is the subtle energy center in the forehead which governs the awakening of the eclectic virtues of wisdom and enlightenment.]

While meditating thus he should think that he is ‘pure consciousness personified’. Such eclectic and ethereal thoughts enables him to witness and experience that essential fount of truthful, eternal and infinite bliss that is glorious and radiant with the splendour of Brahm realisation. Constant and persistent meditation on this point results in the aspirant ascetic becoming one like the object of his attention, which is the self-illuminated eternal blissful Brahm.

[That is, a Brahm-realised ascetic begins to emanate a divine glow to indicate the fact that the hitherto latent divinity that was lying dormant in his bosom has been awakened, and its divine glow effuses from the body of the ascetic like the illumination coming out from the glow worm.] (2).

3. That which provides liberation and deliverance from the horrible torments, agonies, pains and sufferings of remaining in a womb (i.e. prior to taking birth), even during and after taking birth, as well as on becoming old, infirm and decrepit, and finally dying, is called ‘Tarak’¹.

Both the worldly creature with a body, known as a ‘Jiva’ at the micro level, and its macrocosmic counterpart called the ‘Ishwar’, are sheathed (covered, surrounded) by Maya².

Therefore, after all deluding things and their negative influences are removed, after all ignorance is dispelled, and when the things are viewed in the correct perspective by employing the elimination process called ‘Neti-Neti’, i.e. the truth is neither that nor this, or in other words what is seen there as a separate or distinct entity known as Ishwar, the supreme Lord or God, and here as the living creature called Jiva, are not two independent things, for their separate existences are simply a misconception of the mind. The underlying essence that makes them both relevant is their Atma or pure consciousness that lends them their authority and powers, their significance and importance. This Atma is Brahm personified. To see anything in them other than their

essential form and essential ingredient known as Brahm is trying to ignore the real truth and falling prey to delusions of the mind.

So, what remains after removing all deluding things, after eliminating all falsehoods, is the ultimate 'truth and reality', and it is known as 'Advai Brahm', or the non-dual Brahm. That is, the quintessential and universal Truth is one and the same, it is immutable and unfractionable, it is unchallengeable and irrefutable, and it is known as the 'non-dual Brahm' (3).

[Note--¹That is, the entity that can provide freedom from such sufferings, that which can help one cross the hurdle to his eternal peace and bliss by helping him not to enter this vicious cycle of birth and death again and again, is none other than Brahm. The realisation or attainment of this succour and solace providing supreme Authority is called 'Brahm realisation'. The 'light' that is witnessed upon such realisation is a metaphor for self-realisation, self-awakening and enlightenment about the eternal, irrefutable and universal Truth. And since 'truth' is always one, non-dual, unchanging, eternal and infinite, this gives the aspirant the satisfaction of successful accomplishment of his spiritual endeavour. Successful accomplishment in any spiritual exercise has as its reward in the form of permanent peace and bliss for the person who had entered into such a spiritual endeavour.

²This is because Maya is the deluding power of the supreme Authority in creation known as Brahm that has been used by him to create the sense of duality. The factual position is that everything is one and the same, and the different views of them is simply an illusion just like one sees a mirage in a desert and thinks it to be real whereas everyone knows that it is a physical phenomenon created due to the effect of excessive heat on desert sand, and it is the deluded mind that thinks it to be real though it is well aware that such things do happen in a desert and it is wise advice not to follow this illusion. Likewise, when Brahm decided to initiate the process of creation, he had to create a smokescreen of delusions to enable him to hide the truth, because otherwise everyone would renounce this world of artificiality and become recluses, and the result would be everyone becoming a monk, renouncing the world, and the resultant termination of the cycle of birth and death! So, under the influence of Maya or delusions, the living creature thinks that it, the Jiva, and Ishwar, the Lord, are two separate entities. The Jiva offers prayers to the Ishwar and looks upon him for his benevolent mercy and intercession in order to survive and prosper in this competitive world; the Ishwar looks upon the Jiva to offer him oblations and worship that would sustain and nourish the former as well as keep him in an exalted and honourable position. There exists a mutual symbiotic relationship between the two. The Jiva lives on the earth, while the Ishwar lives in the heaven. The Jiva watches the exalted stature, glory, fame and powers that the Ishwar possesses, and so the Jiva tries to acquire that stature for himself. Therefore the Jiva does good and auspicious deeds to go up to heaven, but the deeds themselves pull the Jiva down because of their inherent and inbuilt nature to tie down anyone who gets involved in them. So the creature continues to oscillate like a pendulum between being a mortal being living on earth and the immortal being living in the heaven.

This is the genesis of the theory of 'duality'. Both are covered in an invisible veil of ignorance-based delusion. From the metaphysical point of view, Ishwar is the sum total of all the causal bodies that exist in creation, while the Jiva is represented by the individual causal body which harbours the pure conscious Atma or soul. This factor of the 'pure conscious Atma or soul' is common to both the Ishwar and Jiva, and hence to treat them differently is a stupid proposition caused by deluding effects of the mind. This is called being sheathed by a veil of Maya, or being under the influence of ignorance that prevents one from realising the truth and reality.]

4. To successfully attain it (i.e. to attain self-realisation and witness that self-illuminated Brahm), there are three subtle paths to be followed (or three subtle targets which are to be aimed at, or three subtle objects that are to be accomplished) (4).

5. [This verse describes the meditative technique that opens the inner eye of wisdom and insight. It elucidated about that supreme entity that can be perceived and witnessed inside one's own bosom.]

There is a 'Naadi' (a tubular duct or channel inside the body, usually the nerves and veins; here referring to the former) named Sushumna which is radiant and splendidous like the brilliant sun, and is illuminated like the disc of a full moon. It is also called the Brahm Naadi, because it is the duct inside the body that has direct role to play in awakening of the 'self' as well as the realisation of its truthful nature and stupendous potentials; it is the channel through which one can have access to the supreme experience of Brahm.

It extends from the Muladhar Chakra (at the lower end of the spine, near the anus) right up to the Brahm Randhra Chakra (located at the top of the head). Running through the core of this Naadi, in the form of a hair-like micro thin filament of the dazzling vibrating energy of electric, is the kindled subtle divine energy of the Kundalini. By merely having a mental divine vision of this unleashed energy present in this Naadi, one becomes eligible for obtaining liberation from the bondages of this body and the world, and obtaining deliverance or remittance from the sins and misdeeds that he might have committed.

[This is because this energy is not experienced by all and sundry, and when it does happen its potential powers can help rid one of all his mental perversions and cleanse his inner self much like washing dirty linen in an electric washing machine. The tremendous spiritual energy generated by activating the Kundalini and the subsequent unleashing of its subtle divine energy is like unveiling the glorious sun previously shrouded in a veil of clouds, and thereby unleashing its energy in the form of sunlight.]

A person who concentrates his attention and meditates upon the brilliant source of radiant light perpetually present in the center of the eyebrows (i.e. in the Agya Chakra and called the third eye of wisdom) in conjunction with the divine conscious entity present in the top of the head (i.e. in the Brahm Randhra Chakra as the supreme Brahm) is able to obtain 'Siddhi' or success in his spiritual endeavours and his meditative exercises. In other words, he is able to access the 'Tarak', i.e. he is able to successfully obtain liberation from the limitations and bondages of this gross body and get deliverance from its sufferings and sorrows.

When the two ears are closed with the tip of the index fingers while meditating as above, one hears a hissing sound resembling the one made by a serpent. When one hears it and fixes one's mind on this sound (i.e. concentrates the attention on hearing it), and simultaneously visualises that a blue diffused halo of light is effusing and radiating out from the center of the eyes (at the point mid way between the two eyebrows, from the Agya Chakra), the aspirant ascetic experiences extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy.

[It is like the scene witnessed when one sees a lighthouse from a distance in a rough sea at night—a beam of light comes out from the beacon of the lighthouse and it illuminates the area in its path while the rest of the night sky is pitch dark. The sight of the lighthouse gives hopes and joy to the seaman who has felt lost in the otherwise dark sea at night.

The light emanating from the forehead of the aspirant here is the light of wisdom and self enlightenment; it is the light of self awakening that dispels darkness of ignorance and delusions much like the light of the beacon coming out from the lighthouse.]

The above vision of light is obtained in the head. A similar vision is also subtly seen and experienced in the region of the heart. That is, this light along with the hissing sound are witnessed by a spiritual aspirant both at the mental as well as the emotional level.

[This is a very important observation, because both the mind and the heart should play ball in order to help the aspirant to succeed in his spiritual efforts; otherwise he would start wobbling and wavering and ultimately topple over. Coordination between the mind and the heart are very necessary in success of any enterprise, and the word 'Yoga' comes into play here—i.e. a union has to be established between these two legs of spiritualism in order that the chariot of spiritualism reaches its destination successfully and in one piece.]

In this way, a person who seeks liberation and deliverance for himself, an aspirant who seeks emancipation and salvation for his soul, called a 'Mumuksha', should constantly, consistently and persistently practice so that these signs are visible to him and the hissing sound is heard by him internally. He personally witnesses and experiences them in his own bosom, without the aid of any external medium. This is called 'internal signs or visions' of success in spiritual realisation of Brahm (5).

[Note—The various Chakras and their location, their importance and significance have been described in the Jabal Darshan, Yogchudamani and Yog Raj Upanishads of the Sam Veda which are included in Section II of this book.]

6. [In this verse, the external signs are being described.]

When the meditating aspirant focuses his sight in the space in front of the tip of his nose, he sees different colours in the sky or space at varying distances. At a distance of four fingers, he sees the sky with a light of blue hue; at a distance of six fingers, he sees the sky with a dark hue; at a distance of eight fingers, he sees the sky with a light of red hue; at a distance of ten fingers, he sees the sky with a light of yellow hue; and at a distance of twelve fingers, he sees the sky with a light of white hue. He who stares at that sky element with these varying hues of colours (that appear to radiate out from the center of his eyebrows or his Agya Chakra as described in the previous verse no. 5), and sees them in a perpetual manner, is said to be an accomplished Yogi (ascetic). These colours are clearly visible at a later stage as rays of light radiating out from a source, though in the beginning the eyes shift so rapidly that it is not able to discern them as distinct rays of light but as a mere haze. When these rays are clearly visible then the ascetic is said to be really accomplished and successful. He is deemed to have obtained Siddhi (success).

Though the eyes have a tendency to shift rapidly in the beginning, but by and by their fixing on the target is achieved when, as a result of diligent practice, rays of yellow light seem to emanate from their corners and beam out. They help in fixing the eyes and prevent them from moving from object to object. [Refer to the yellow colour of the sky seen at a distance of ten fingers from the tip of the nose. Practically it is like seeing through a telescope with the inner walls painted yellow.]

An aspirant ascetic who can visualise the ethereal glow of the divine energy present like a halo around the head at a distance of about twelve fingers¹ is able to achieve success in experiencing the essence of eternity and bliss. When an aspirant is able to witness this halo around his head, then no matter where he is and what his

circumstances are, he is deemed to be a fully accomplished and an attained ascetic, known as a 'Siddha' (6).

[Note--¹This halo is the divine effulgence of the supreme transcendental Brahm present in the Brahm Randhra Chakra at the top of the head. Just like a glow worm emanating illumination on its own that can be seen even from a distance even if the worm is wrapped in a plastic sheet, the radiance emanating from Brahm forms a halo around the top of the head. Another analogy would be the halo seen around the disc of the full moon when a film of moisture accompanied by suspended dust particles is present in the sky. Refer also to Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, Brahmin 1 and 2.]

7. [In this verse, the five forms of the sky element are described with their metaphysical relevance that helps the aspirant in his endeavour of Brahm realisation. This is the metaphysical path of mediation that treats Brahm with the attributes similar to the five forms of the subtle skies. Refer also to Mandal Brahman Upanishad, 1/2/11-13, 3/1/5, 4/1/3.]

A person who visualises the vast fathomless sky element¹ representing the supreme Brahm as having the attributes possessed by the sky at the time of sun rise—viz, the sun with a rounded, brilliantly splendorous disc, having the fierceness and radiance like that of the fiercely burning fire—is able to achieve a similarly exalted stature. He becomes an image of that 'Akash' or the sky itself where the brilliant sun is seen².

The next sky that is described now is the dark sky before the sun rises, the pre-dawn sky. It is filled with twinkling stars that give the dark sky its soft and subtle hue of light that is almost imperceptible. This sky is called the 'Paramakash'³.

The third subtle sky is called 'Mahakash' and it is dazzling like the fire of Kaal, or the fire of dooms-day⁴.

The fourth sky is called 'Tattwakash', or the sky that surrounds the essential and ultimate universal Truth. This sky is considered as the best subtle space because it surrounds and harbours the 'truth', and is therefore suffused with a brilliant light typical of Truth⁵. This sky forms the outer periphery of the next sky.

Finally, the fifth subtle sky is called the 'Suryakash', and it is brilliant and splendorous as if there were millions of suns in it⁶.

In this way, these five skies present externally in the physical world as well as internally in a subtle way are both indicative of the stupendous powers and potentials of Brahm. The contemplation and meditation on these five skies has as its main objective the realisation of Brahm with all its endless, vast and infinite glories and virtues as represented by these skies. Focusing one's attention on these skies is aimed at realising the presence of Brahm in them, both at the macro level as well as at the micro level.

He who focuses his attention and worships the boundless sky element with all its subtle forms (aspects) is indeed freed from all his fetters, and becomes boundless and unfettered like the sky element. Concentrating upon these skies is like focusing on the supreme Brahm that possesses all the virtues possessed by these skies. This liberating and delivering, un-fettering and un-shackling virtue of Brahm represented by the unfettered and unbound vastness of the endless and infinite sky is called 'Tarak'. It bestows emancipation and salvation to the aspirant ascetic by making him eternally blissful, peaceful and tranquil because his mind ceases to have any relevance in this state as far as this world is concerned. That is, he becomes 'Amanask'⁷ (7).

[Note— ¹The *sky* is the subtlest of the five elements (the others being air/wind, fire/energy, water and earth) in creation. Basically sky is indivisible and uniform, but for the purpose of study it has been hypothetically divided into five components or sections. These divisions of the physical sky are based upon the different forms it appears in with respect to an observer on earth. These divisions are then used to draw parallel with various metaphysical concepts in order to bring out the subtle differences between these concepts clearly and make them comprehensible. These hypothetical divisions are therefore used as metaphors for the purpose of study and comprehension, and not to suggest that the sky can be actually divided.

Now, technically the *Akash* is the first form of the sky just above the surface of the earth, the sky which is infinite, fathomless, measureless and eternal, the sky which appears bright during the day time as if it has its own illumination radiating from it, the sky which is dotted by so many things that are extraneous to it but appear to be an integral part of it, the sky which is there but cannot be touched, felt, smelled and tasted but only witnessed, but technically not 'seen' because something that is vacant cannot be seen had it not been for the impurities present in it, the sky which appears to have a wide variety of colours like a multi-coloured canvas but is fundamentally colourless, and the sky which is fundamentally pure and uncorrupt and untainted by any of these things. Therefore, this word 'Akash' is a hypothetical division of the immutable sky which is used as a metaphor to describe some aspect of metaphysics.

The second division of the sky is the *Paramakash* which is the sky seen during the night time. This portion of the sky is dotted by stars and is not totally dark because of the light reflected from the twinkling of the stars as well as the presence of the moon, the reflected light from the earth's lighted side and other celestial bodies that reflect sun's light.

The third division of the sky is the *Mahakash* which is the greater sky just like we have a city and its outer suburban out lying areas called the greater city area. This sky is the vast space beyond the solar system, and stretches into the deep recesses of the cosmos, and it includes the inter-galactic space. Obviously this is like hell where there is no trace of life and if any one goes there, even hypothetically, then he just gets lost to humanity. It sure is burning with hellish fire of cosmic explosions where new stars are continuously being born and destroyed, where new galaxies are formed and old ones get annihilated, where suns explode into black holes and supernovas create immense cauldrons of unimaginable heat and energy.

The fourth division of the sky is the *Tattwakash* which refers, as the name suggests, to the essential form of the sky element which is the subtlest form of the five elements created in creation and has, inter alia, such virtues as being infinite, eternal, immutable, immaculate, omnipresent, all pervading, all encompassing, fathomless, measureless etc.

Lastly, the fifth division of the sky is called the *Suryakash* or that portion of the sky that surrounds the celestial Sun. It is therefore as radiant and splendid as the sun itself, and it is almost impossible to see it with naked eyes. The brightest object in the heavens, the Sun, is present here, and as is well known this Sun is a metaphor for a number of things, such as life as well as the light of knowledge, wisdom, enlightenment and erudition, and therefore for the supreme transcendental Brahm. In fact this Brahm possesses all the virtues displayed by the sky, and therefore the latter is usually used as a metaphor for Brahm, though this Brahm's virtues are not limited to the ones displayed by the sky which forms only a fraction of all the virtues possessed by Brahm.

²A person who has wisdom and erudition to perceive Brahm as having the stupendous glory, radiance, splendour and energy as that possessed by the sun, the potentials and powers of fire, the life creating, sustaining and annihilating powers possessed both by the sun and the fire, and having the attributes of the sky—such as

being fathomless, measureless, vast, subtlest of the five elements of creation, incorruptible, inherently spotless in spite of the presence of so many impurities, omnipresent, all-pervading, all-encompassing, eternal and infinite etc.—becomes enlightened and exalted in his mental stature. Such a man stands out amongst his compatriots and peers, and is honoured and lauded for his wisdom and enlightenment. This is a metaphoric way of saying that he becomes one like the sky element called *Akash*, and he remains firm in his convictions about Brahm and steadfastly established with the eclectic attributes of the sky. He is deemed to be as exalted and honourable as Brahm having the attributes of the sky element.

There is another interpretation to this verse. By realising Brahm, the ascetic acquires a divine halo around him which resembles the bright disc of the sun as it is seen during the day in the sky. His enlightenment and wisdom glow and emanate light which is enjoyed by others; they benefit from his presence amongst them.

³Though the *Parmakash* representing the night sky appears to be dark and blank, it is actually not completely dark as the stars lend their light to it. The ascetic who is enlightened and realised represents the *Parmakash* because he seems to be bland, blank and disinterested in anything, but this is only a superficial view because darkness of the sky here does not mean ignorance or delusion but of remaining oblivious to all the corrupting influences of the world that might taint an ascetic's mind and heart. His apparently bland and blank heart and mind are twinkling with numerous gems of wisdom which are highlighted only when the dazzle of the sun symbolising the various charms of the world are eliminated. This metaphor of the stars in the background of the dark sky is a brilliant depiction of the vast possibilities and potentials that unfold themselves before a Brahm realised person. This person has a clean slate like the canopy of the dark sky, but the vast treasury of wisdom and enlightenment that he has is likened to the uncountable stars in the dark canopy of the night sky.

⁴The ascetic acquires such mystical powers as represented by the *Mahakash*, and he can even cause destruction and death if he so wishes.

⁵This *Tattwakash* is the sky that surrounds the transcendental and supreme Truth in creation, which is Brahm, and forms the peripheral sky around the central core. The self-illuminated Brahm is the source of all light in creation just like the celestial sun which is self-illuminated and which lights up the length and breadth of the sky of the solar system. If an ordinary sun has this potential and power, then one can imagine and expect innumerable times more from that authority that has created this sun in the first place and has given it its powers and potentials. After all, even modern science has established that our sun is not the only sun in the universe, and there is uncountable number of suns scattered in the bowl of the cosmos, some still in the nascent stage while others on the verge of extinction. So it is easy to visualise that Brahm which is at the core of this stupendous cosmic cauldron if we were to take only a physical stand on Brahm. From the metaphysical view point, this Brahm is the supreme authority in creation and the Soul of it. It is Brahm that drives this dynamo known as the creation. Therefore the sky or space where it is located is also glowing with the light that emanates from it much like the sky around the celestial sun. When the ascetic has realised Brahm, his inner self also glows with the divine light of self enlightenment, and it becomes as radiant and glorious as the sky around Brahm, because this Brahm is present in his very own self. The whole body of such a realised ascetic becomes radiant and glorious like this sky.

⁶Finally we have the *Suryakash* or that sky that is in the immediate vicinity and in the presence of that stupendous fount of divine energy known as Brahm. This sky forms the inner ring or layer that immediately surrounds Brahm, and therefore it is natural that it is more dazzlingly bright than the other skies that are not so close, and it has a brightness that resembles the blinding light of millions of suns just like the immediate space around

the celestial sun. This immediate sky of the sun just cannot be seen by a naked eye, it is impossible to do so, because it would burn the eyes, whereas it is possible to see the sky at a distance from the sun. Similarly, the ascetic's inner core is dazzlingly bright with the light of self-realisation and enlightenment. All other lights, or all other knowledge and all other ways of attaining Brahm pale into insignificance when this light is witnessed by the ascetic in his own bosom.

The concept of the five forms of the sky has been described also in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 4/1/1-4, and Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 1/5-8.

⁷The concept of *Amanask* has been elaborately described in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/3/4; 2/2/4; 3/1/1-6 and 3/2/1.

Briefly, The word *Amanask* literally means without the influence of the mind; being de-linked from the mind; annihilation of the mind; absence of the mind. This state leads to serenity, tranquility and peace of the mind and heart. The Atma generally interacts with the outside world through the mind-intellect complex. When the mind is snapped shut, the chain of receptions and responses of the Atma vis-à-vis the world also gets out of functioning. The Atma then remains cocooned in the sheath called the bliss sheath which surrounds it in the causal body. It is not impinged upon by the perplexing impetuses from the outside world because the circuit has been broken at the level of the mind. Hence, the *Amanask* state is when the Atma of the creature, i.e. the pure consciousness becomes detached from and remains oblivious of the deluding external world along with its trademark problems, and consequential becomes rested, peaceful and tranquil. The Atma is uninvolved and aloof from all that the body might be doing in this world if the creature remains permanently in this *Amanask* state, because it is the mind and not the body that actually does the 'thinking, feeling, remembering, analyzing, deciding and responding' to the stimuli that the body receives from the external world. If the mind is stopped from functioning, then the body may be doing anything but the creature does not register that deed, and therefore the Atma is also not aware of what the body was doing and neither is it responsible for its consequences because it is not a participant in the entire process. That is why this state of *Amanask* is liberating for the creature's Atma.]

8. According to the canons of Yoga, there are two aspects of doing meditation by following the precepts of Tarak Yoga, and to achieve success in it. These two are the first half called 'Purvardha', and the second half called 'Uttarardha'. The 'sloka' or verse of the scripture that endorse this view says thus—'This Yoga or meditation technique is of two basic types; the first is called 'Tarak' and the second is called 'Amanask' (8).

9. We see the celestial sun and moon through the pupil of our eye. Similarly, one should visualise the presence of a subtle sun and moon in the subtle sky located in the head (around the Brahm Randhra Chakra and the Agya Chakra). [The head is compared to the universe, and the space inside this universe is the subtle sky.] The mind should be taught to treat these two entities, i.e. the sun and the moon symbolising the intelligent and emotive aspects of the mind respectively, as one and the same. [In fact, the moon shines because of the presence of the sun, and this applies to the mind also because without intelligent control, the emotions of the mind would wreck havoc.] The mind should practice and be taught to remain focused on an object, a target, a subject, in order to achieve success in achieving it; this object or target in the present case is Brahm realisation; Brahm is the subject matter of all spiritual quest.

If the mind is not taught to remain steady and focused, then it would be difficult to control the sense organs which have a natural and inherent tendency to swerve or gravitate towards their respective objects in this material world which charms them no end¹. That is why a sincere aspirant ascetic should endeavour to constantly contemplate and meditate upon the 'Tarak' Brahm through his internal eyes of wisdom and enlightenment (9).

[Note--¹For example, the eye has a natural tendency to see that thing which is pleasant and attractive, no matter if that particular thing or scene has a corrupting influence upon the mind and heart. As for instance, one would like to see two bulls fighting each other in a bull fight, oblivious of the fact that the sub-conscious mind is picking up the subtle message of violence, blood and gore, which in their turn would make the man himself violent, blood thirsty and vengeful. But if the mind is practiced to restrain itself, then it would instruct the eye to shun such scenes and instead see more amiable and soothing scenes such as the colourful view of the sky during the rising and setting of the sun, or the swan floating majestically on the surface of a serene lake surrounded by blue mountains and bordered by verdant green forests.

So a wise person is one who channelises his mind into doing constructive things that helps him to achieve success in attaining higher objectives in life than letting the mind remain squirming and splashing in the slush of worldly delusions.]

10. This 'Tarak' meditation that provides liberation and deliverance from the bondages of the body has two aspects. One is called 'Murta' Tarak while the other is called 'Amurta or non-Murta' Tarak. That where the sense organs of perception and action culminate (i.e. the subtle mind) is called the 'Murta Tarak', while that which is beyond their purview, that which is visualised at a spot outside the central point of the two eyebrows, or that which lives in the causal body, is called 'Amurta Tarak'¹.

Therefore the aspirant should always concentrate his attention on the essence of things and not allow it to be misled by delusions. The fundamental essence is always the same because Brahm is one and non-dual. As a result, he is able to have an experience of the supreme transcendental Brahm as a fount of profound eternal and truthful bliss as well as of bright light having a divine radiance. This establishes that the Brahm that goes beyond these two forms and definitions of Murta Brahm and Amurta Brahm, i.e. the Brahm that is beyond the limiting visions of a formed variety and a variety that has no fixed form, is an auspicious fount of brilliant 'Tej', or divine energy and splendour personified. This Brahm should be seen (witnessed and experienced) by the internal vision of insight, wisdom and enlightenment.

The mind depends upon the eye to see anything in the external world. Therefore, the 'internal eye' is needed by the mind to 'see' (visualise, witness and experience) the divine and subtle light provided by the Tarak Brahm. That is, the eye of wisdom and insight, of enlightenment and erudition is needed to visualise the eclectic and stupendous form of that supreme entity known as Brahm that can actually provide liberation to the aspirant from all his spiritual troubles as well as ensure deliverance to his soul. Without the eye of wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and knowledge one cannot hope to see (witness and experience) that supreme Brahm although he is residing in one's own bosom. This understanding kindles the light of self-realisation in the aspirant ascetic and opens his inner eyes of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment. Such an attained ascetic becomes 'Brahm realised' (10).

[Note--¹The mind-intellect uses the various organs of perception, such as the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin to perceive the external world which is nothing but a manifestation of the supreme Brahm, because that Brahm pervades throughout the creation, uniformly and universally. There is nothing that exists that is not Brahm. This conviction of the mind enables it to see Brahm in the entire world, and since this form of Brahm is visible and in an image form as the myriad shapes and sizes of this creation, it is therefore called Murta or formed aspect of Brahm. The Atma (the pure conscious self which is the true identity of the creature) perceives this form of manifested Brahm and worships it through the external organs of the body—the organs of perception and the organs of action. The mind-intellect complex of the subtle body is the command and control centre for the Atma. Therefore it follows that the Brahm which the creature recognises and worships through his external body that is under the command and control of the subtle body is called ‘Murta Brahm’.

On the contrary, ascetics train their mind to focus on the divine light that is seen during meditation in front of their eyes on the tip of their nose as previously described in verse no. 6 above. This form of Brahm is formless, and therefore is called ‘Amurta Tarak’ or an un-formed variant of Brahm. This wisdom and enlightenment are the exclusive domain of the Atma as the latter is the pure consciousness embodying these grand and eclectic virtues. The higher echelons of the subtle mind (i.e. the thinking and discriminating intellect) perceives the same Brahm in an un-manifested form as the source of all divinity and illumination symbolising all knowledge in existence. It is the divine fount of light that lights up the entire creation, both at the macro level as well as the micro level. It is the pure consciousness in all its glorious magnificence. This subtle and sublime form of Brahm is not visible to the gross organ of the eye like the manifested Brahm with external contours and attributes as revealed in the form of this creation. It is sublimity and subtlety at its glorious best. Hence, this latter form of Brahm that is invisible but nevertheless all-pervading and ubiquitous is called ‘Amurta Brahm’. It is also recognised as ‘Tej’ because it is a fount of splendorous light that is the source of all illumination in this creation.

Essentially both forms of Brahm are liberating because both give wisdom and enlightenment to the aspirant, albeit in different ways and contexts. The Murta Brahm is visualised by a wise and intelligent mind which has understood the reality and truth behind the façade of falsehoods, while the Amurta Brahm is witnessed during meditative exercises that require effort, concentration and practice. Refer Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/3/1-4.]

11. A person who is able to visualise the presence of a radiant source of light at a point just above the middle point of the two eyebrows by his inner sight of wisdom and enlightenment is known as a Tarak Yogi, i.e. an ascetic who has obtained liberation and deliverance, who has crossed over from this mundane world of sense objects, material gratification and delusions, to the transcendental world of spiritualism and divinity. Simultaneously he should practice to raise his two eyebrows a bit so that they fall in line with this point. [This is like focusing the lens of the telescopic camera so as to bring into focus something that is far away and not clearly visible to the naked eye. In metaphysical terms it refers to finding out the truth about and focusing one’s attention on Brahm after removing all cluttering delusions and falsehoods that intervene between the aspirant and Brahm. Symbolically, it refers to the fact that he should raise his quotient of wisdom and enlightenment to a higher plane from his existing level.] This is the first half or phase of Tarak Yoga and it is called ‘Purvardh’. The second half or phase, which is known as

‘Uttarardh’, is also called Amurta. During this phase, the mind-intellect becomes defunct (as opposed to the first phase where it remains focused on the light emanating from the point just above the middle of the two eyebrows as described above). This is called the Amanask state of existence. [See verse no.10].

There is a stupendous fount of subtle energy that radiates rays of effervescent light and energy situated at the posterior end of the palate and the roof of the base of the tongue. Yogis (ascetics) are expected to focus their attention on this source of light. This meditation entitles the ascetic to acquire the various mystical powers such as Anima etc. (11).

[Note—There are eight mystical powers or *Siddhis* that acclaimed ascetics possess as a result of their meditation practices. These eight Siddhis are the following-- (i) ‘Anima’ means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) ‘Mahima’ is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one’s achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) ‘Garima’ is to have weight, stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) ‘Laghima’ is to have simplicity and humility; (v) ‘Praapti’ is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) ‘Prakramya’ is to have valour, ardor, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) ‘Ishwatwa’ is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) ‘Vashitwa’ is to be able to control and subdue others.]

12. When the aspirant is able to achieve success at coordinating his two visions¹—the external sight having its seat in the organ of the eye and the inner sight of wisdom and enlightenment having its seat in the mind and intellect complex—he is said to be empowered with a mystical vision (which has a magical three dimensional view of Brahm). When such coordination is established, the ascetic is said to be in a meditative posture called ‘Shambhavi Mudra’. The place where such realised persons reside is said to be most hallowed and highly exalted; all those people on whom his sight falls also become pure and fortunate. Anyone who worships and honours such a realised and accomplished ascetic (as a personification of Brahm) is able to please him and have easy access to him (in his capacity of being Brahm personified). This bestows upon him the privilege of becoming eligible for getting liberation and deliverance from this deluding and entrapping world and its accompanying horrors² (12).

[Note—¹This is like the 3 D vision technology of the modern age. In this process, the image seen by the right eye and the left eye are recorded separately and their synchronization is done in the brain to coordinate the two independent images to form a coherent and composite picture that has three dimensions to it—length, breadth and depth. The Yoga described here as well as elsewhere which focuses on the middle of the eyebrows is a meditative version of this 3 D technology to have a vision of Brahm.

²This is because the ascetic referred to here is not an ordinary human being once he has become Brahm-realised. He has become a ‘living Brahm’—a Brahm that lives, speaks and walks in his visible form amongst his followers. That is why a divine halo is said to effuse from the body of such acclaimed ascetics, and their heads glow with the divine light resembling the halo around the sun. By following them, serving them and keeping their company, the follower also reaps the benefit of spiritual welfare just like the moon shines by the light of the sun falling upon it.]

13. His internal vision transforms itself in a fount of brilliant, dazzling and glittering source of white light (like the sun's light).

[That is, he is empowered with the best form of insight and wisdom, because this 'light' is a metaphor for erudition, wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation. This light removes all darkness of ignorance and delusions.]

With the help of guidance provided by a wise and erudite as well as a self-realised moral preceptor and spiritual guide or teacher, called a Guru, a person is able to see/visualise internally that supreme fount of ethereal and glorious light emanating from a subtle divine lotus having a thousand petals that is present inside his own mind as its very core, making up its faculty of intellect.

[That is, the mind's intelligence is a metaphor for Brahm and his stupendous powers that are manifested in the form of the mind.]

It also resembles the majestic and magnificent pure consciousness that is present in the core of the symbolic lotus having sixteen petals. [This lotus is present in the subtle heart, and it is here that the pure conscious Atma is said to reside.] This consciousness is witnessed in the fourth state of existence called Turiya.

This holistic view of divinity is at the root of good conduct, auspicious behaviour and righteousness (13).

[Note—There are two symbolic lotuses—one has sixteen petals and it is located in the subtle heart, and the other has a thousand petals and is located in the head. The former is where the Hridaya Chakra is, while the latter is the site of the Vyom Chakra. The Atma lives in the former, and Brahm lives in the latter. Merely by their location, the Atma signifies a lower plane of existence vis-à-vis the Brahm. The Atma symbolises the ordinary creature who is controlled and driven by the heart and its emotions and impulses, and Brahm signifies the existence that is controlled and driven by the virtues of wisdom, deep thought and knowledge. Coordination between the two is the aim of Yoga.]

14-15. [These two verses describe the qualities that should be present in a Guru or moral preceptor and spiritual guide that would make him entitled to teach others on spiritual and metaphysical matters and show them the auspicious path leading to emancipation and salvation.]

A Guru should be well versed in the tenets of the Vedas or the knowledge contained in them, must possess the best of virtues and characters and be exemplary in his behaviours and temperament, should be an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu (the sustainer and Lord of the world), should be free from the tainting effects of such negative traits as Matsar (i.e. jealousy, envy) etc.¹, should be an expert in the art, craft and science of Yoga (meditation techniques and contemplative practices) and devoted towards them (i.e. must practice them himself, and be sincere and honest about his firm conviction about their efficacy), should be so involved in the philosophy of Yoga that it forms his way of life and soul (i.e. the philosophy of Yoga should be reflected in his personal life, and his preaching should hold conviction), should be immaculate, pure and uncorrupt, should be devoted towards his own Guru, and should be diligent and committed towards attaining the supreme Lord at all costs (15).

[Note—¹According to the Varaha Upanishad, canto 1 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, there are *six enemies* which are metaphors for the various faults that are associated with a creature. They are the following—Kaam (lust, passions, desires and yearnings), Krodh (anger), Lobh (greed,

rapacity), Moha (attraction, infatuations, attachments, delusions and ignorance), Mada (arrogance, false pride, hypocrisy) and Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice)

16. The word Guru has two letters—viz. ‘Gu’ and ‘Ru’. The word Gu means darkness, while the word Ru refers to that which can remove or dispel that darkness. Hence, he who is able to remove or dispel the darkness of ignorance and delusions, who prevents these elements from spreading their tentacles of darkness, and in case the darkness already exists then he is able to remove it with his auspicious advice and guidance, and who is able to liberate his disciple from the clutches of this all engulfing darkness that threatens to drown him is called a Guru (16).

17. A Guru is akin to the supreme Brahm personified; a Guru is the supreme abode or shelter that provides succour and solace to the tormented soul of the disciple and the last port of call for him; a Guru is like a treasury of transcendental and eclectic knowledge of Divinity; and a Guru is the best person who should be consulted and followed by a disciple who sees him as a role model to be emulated (17).

18. A Guru represents the best of values and the highest stature a person can ever hope to attain, and a Guru is the best asset that a person possesses (because he gives him good advice and props up his sagging morale during his bad days, he can be faithfully relied upon with no fear of betrayal, he shows him the auspicious, noble and righteous path when he is in a dilemma, he acts as a beacon of hope for his disciple when the rest of the world has betrayed him, and he never has any vested interest in anything other than what is good and fortunate for his disciple and which would ensure his all round welfare and happiness). A person who gives the best advice according to given circumstances and time is said to be the best of all Gurus as far as the disciple is concerned¹.

[Note--¹We should note here that the Upanishads have a very broad and open minded approach to any subject; they are not dogmatic and rigid in their doctrines. A person may be expert in any one field but not in another, and this does not mean that the disciple should not benefit from this man for the knowledge that he possesses. Therefore, for a particular problem a disciple may have one Guru, but for another problem that confronts him he might as well have another. It is not binding upon him that once he has accepted a particular person as his Guru he cannot accept another person as his second Guru. The main function of the institution of a Guru is to help a disciple in all his endeavours, but in an auspicious and righteous manner. Even one's own father and mother and wife and son and friend, and for that matter even one's enemy can be a Guru if he can enlighten the person in a particular field.

There is a minor Upanishad called *Dwayo-panishad* which describes the chief characteristics of a true Guru. It has only seven Mantras. This Upanishad is being cited here verse by verse to clearly highlight the main features of a Guru:---‘(a) Verse nos.1-2= A person is called a Guru if he is endowed with enlightenment and wisdom making him well versed and skilled in the Vedas, both in their literal knowledge as well as in the profound wisdom and the ethereal and eclectic metaphysical and spiritual philosophy they contain, who is an ardent devotee and sincere follower of Lord Vishnu, who is free from such negative traits as jealousy, envy and malice, who is well versed and skilled in the various holy and divine Mantras, their usage, their ethereal importance and spiritual significance as

well as all other matters related with them, who is sincerity devoted to those Mantras and has firm belief, conviction and faith in them, who seeks the shelter and refuge of those Mantras, who is pure and immaculate, uncorrupt and unpolluted in any form, who is devoted and dedicated to his own Guru, and who is well versed and skilled not only in all the Purans but all other scriptures as well.

(b) Verse no.3= A person is called a Guru who has a comprehensive and holistic knowledge and understanding of all the scriptures, and who not only preaches righteousness, probity and propriety as well as nobility of thoughts and actions but also lives them and implements them in their letter and spirit in his personal life.

(c) Verse no. 4= The letter 'Gu' means darkness, while the letter 'Ru' means that which remove that darkness. Hence, Guru is one who removes the darkness representing ignorance and delusions that are so typically associated with this deluding world.

(d) Verse no.5= A true Guru is equivalent to the supreme and transcendental Brahm; he is the ultimate destination for a seeker; he is a fount of the supreme knowledge and the source of the best of such knowledge; he is deemed to be the best and the greatest asset for a man.

(e) Verse no.6= A Guru is the best thing a wise seeker seeks and searches for, he is the best and the supreme place for seeking refuge and shelter with, and he being a dispenser of the profoundest of wisdom and knowledge is deemed to be a person who is the most important, who has the highest standards of greatness and magnificence, who is most dignified and meritorious, who is most weighty and significant, and who is most distinct and outstanding in all aspects.

(f) Verse no.7= Pronouncing the word 'Guru' even once enables the aspirant to access liberation and deliverance from this entrapping and deluding world. All his efforts are deemed to have been successful by simply saying this powerful word sincerely. Such a man does never come back (enters the cycle of birth and death) in this world again—verily, this is the truth. Those who understand this fact correctly get the desired fruit'.]

19. A person who reads and studies this Upanishad is able to get liberation and deliverance from this entrapping world of artificiality and delusions. All the affects of his accumulated sins of his many previous lives are destroyed (nullified and made ineffective; remitted). All his various desires, hopes, wishes and expectations are fulfilled. All his endeavours bear fruit (i.e. are successful and are rewarded).

A person who understands and realises the import of this teaching is indeed the one who is well versed in the knowledge contained in this as well as all other Upanishads. This is verily what this Upanishad says. Amen! (19).

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(III—B) Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad

This is one of the prime Upanishads dealing with Yoga. It is in the form of a discourse by the Sun God in response to the question put forward to him by a sage named Trishiki Brahmin, and it is from him that this Upanishad has derived its name.

The questions the sage asks about the origin of things are mentioned in canto 1, verse no.1, and the rest of the canto describes the genesis of creation in response to those questions. The first quarter of canto 2 deals with various metaphysical concepts related to genesis of, while the major part deals with Yoga. This Upanishad defines, inter alia, Pran, Brahm, the various elements, the various stages in the development of the cosmos, its cause, the various states of existence, the different branches of Yoga, the different meditation exercises and sitting postures, the controlling of the vital winds and cleansing of the Naadis (the veins and nerves in the body), the benefits of Yoga, the process of doing Pranayam (a breath control exercise), the concept of Yam, Niyam, Dharna, Pratyahar etc.

In short, this Upanishad enumerates the process of self purification in a comprehensive manner. Other Upanishads which are very similar in nature and content are Jabal-darshan and Yogchudamani Upanishads amongst others.]

Canto--1

1. Once upon a time, a Brahmin named Trishiki went to the divine abode of Lord Aditya (the Sun God) and asked, 'Oh Lord! What is this body? What is Pran? What is the cause of all this (that exists)? What is the Atma?' [1]

2. He (Aditya) replied, 'Oh Brahmin! Whatever there is is an image of Shiva. Be convinced of it and know of it as such that the Lord who is eternal, universal and imperishable, is pristine pure and uncorrupt, is holy, divine, faultless and the one who is beyond reproach, who is omnipresent, all-pervading, almighty, majestic and magnanimous, is non-dual and an embodiment of beatitude and felicity—that supreme Lord is a 'witness to all' that exists. But the paradox is that he himself has assumed myriad forms just like a red hot piece of iron takes any form but remains 'iron' nevertheless. If it is asked which entity is to be truly seen or observed in all that is visible or 'lighted' in the form of this multifarious creation, then the irrefutable and emphatic answer would be 'Truth' which is a synonym for the almighty Brahm because it dispels or eliminates all ignorance and delusions which is at the base of this creation'. [That is, if one were to find out the truth in this world having myriad forms and astounding degree of diversity, one would conclude that it is Brahm. The reason for the enquiry is the doubt created by the diversity of the creation, because real 'truth' cannot be more than one, it cannot be many and multifarious. Therefore, we also conclude that since the visible world is so diverse that it makes a man dizzy, it has to be non-truth, simply because 'truth' can't be more than one. But the existence of the world cannot be denied outright

as it is tangible, visible and witnessed first hand. So, the single essential element of Truth in this variable and diverse world is what is known as Brahm. This Brahm is non-dual and immutable like the universal element known as 'Truth'. The external variable features of the world are simply delusions created around this 'truth' by Maya.] [2].

3. [This verse describes the sequence in which the creation came into being.] Brahm created the 'Avayakta' (literally that which is not visible or manifestly evident and cannot be described, but does exist without doubt in a subtle and imperceptible form; here referring to Hiranyagarbha, the subtle body of the cosmos).

From Avayakta was produced 'Mahat' (literally meaning large, huge, vast, majestic and glorious; here referring to the Viraat Purush). Mahat produced 'Ahankar' (meaning the characteristics of pride, ego and a sense of false grandeur and majesty leading to arrogance, haughtiness and hypocrisy). Ahankar created the five 'Tanmatras' (referring to the senses of perceptions, such as touch, sound, sight, taste and smell). The next that came into being, from this Tanmatra, were the five gross elements called 'Mahabhuts' (which are the elements air, space, fire, water and earth). This entire universe has been created by these five elements, in different permutations and combinations, as its building blocks (much like atoms in a molecule, and molecules in any gross material thing in this world) [3].

[Note—The sequence thus becomes:--(1) Brahm, (2) Avayakta, (3) Mahat, (4) Ahankar, (5) the five Tanmatras, (6) the five Mahabhuts, and (7) the universe as we know it.]

4. What is this world? It is a creation which results from the various faults associated with the five 'Bhuts' (which are earth, water, fire, air and space). How is the same egg-like rounded mass of cosmic jelly, called Pinda (which is the primordial cosmic embryo) divided into various divisions due to the faults associated with the five elements? All the five elements have their origin from the same source, and therefore are expected to be identical. But they aren't. This is because of the varying level of subtlety that they have and the different functions they would perform. These five basic, primary elements of creation combined in varying ratios and proportions, in different permutations and combinations, to give (produce) an infinite variety of products (things) in this creation. This is the reason why the visible world is so multifaceted and varied. Each of its unit possesses a specific and unique character, quality, virtue, potential etc. depending upon a particular configuration in which these primary elements had combined or mixed together to create that particular thing, and this configuration is not repeated again, thereby bestowing a unique character to that particular thing.

Besides this, each unit of creation was assigned different name, exhibited different features, assumed different functions and roles depending upon the place, circumstance, time and context in which they existed. As a result, there came into being uncountable numbers and forms of Gods as well as the creatures and other things in this world [4].

[Note—It is easy to understand this phenomenon. Just like a given set of five primary colours can be mixed together in umpteen numbers of combinations to create an astounding array of colours of various hues and shades that are so varied in their external appearances as to be completely unique in themselves and have no apparent relation to the original ingredients, these five elements of creation (sky, air, fire, water and earth)

combine with each other in equally innumerable permutations and combinations, in uncountable ratios and quantities, to give rise to things (units of creation) of varying subtlety and grossness and of such stupendous variations that no two units resembled one another, no two units were identical, and each one of them had its unique character and identity. The possibilities in which these five primary elements could be mixed or combined were infinite, and therefore the possibilities of type of creatures and material things formed by this mixing or combination were also infinite. And so came into being this fascinatingly magnificent, stupendously multifarious and astoundingly varied creation.]

5. The 'sky' or space (Akash)¹ element has five subtle divisions or forms—Antakaran (the discriminatory intellect; discriminatory powers; wisdom; morality), Mana (the mind and heart, the thoughts and emotions), Buddhi (the intellect; intelligence), Chitta (the memory; recollection powers; discriminatory intellect; the ability to concentrate and pay attention), and Ahankar (pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness).

[Like the sky element, these qualities formed were the subtlest ones in creation. Again, like the sky element, they couldn't be seen independently but only in the context of other elements. For example, the same Mana and Buddhi appear to be different in different creatures. No two individuals will have the same level of wisdom and intelligence. It will depend on a variety of other factors just like the sky showing different colours depending upon numerous factors such as moisture, dust particles and other impurities, presence of clouds, angle of sunlight etc.]

The 'wind' or air (Vayu) element has five subtle divisions or forms---Samaan (that wind which controls circulation in the body), Udaan (that helps in upliftment of the soul; it helps the body to get up from a reclining position; it moves up inside the body), Vyan (that which pervades throughout the body maintaining equilibrium), Apaana (that wind which is inhaled and passes down the body; helps in ingestion, digestion and excretion of food), and Pran (the vital wind that is regarded as the spark of life inside the otherwise dead and inane gross body; exhaled breath). [The same wind/air element serves different functions in the body.]

The 'fire' (Agni) element takes the following subtle forms---the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose. [These are the organs of perception in the body and are obviously gross in form, but the fire element resides in a subtle form in them. This stanza means that the fire element resides in these five external organs of the body to keep them active and energised. That is why they feel 'warm' to touch. When a man dies, the fire element leaves the body, and consequentially these organs feel 'cold' to touch.]

The 'water' (Apaha) produced the following five Tanmatras, or senses, such as hearing (pertaining to the ears), touch (pertaining to skin), sight (pertaining to eyes), taste (pertaining to tongue), and smell (pertaining to nose). [This stanza indicates the flow of blood in all the organs of the body, because it is the blood flowing in the veins and capillaries along with the sensations flowing in the nerves present in the body that these organs are able to carry on the functions of perceptions specific to them. Blood is a fluid and it is one of the forms in which the water element lives in the body to keep it alive and active.]

The 'earth' (Prithivi) element produced the following---voice (or mouth), hands, legs, anus and genitals. [These are the organs of action. The earth element is the grossest of the five elements in symbolic terms of level of erudition, wisdom and intellectual

development, and the ability to think and discriminate. This is because it is the heaviest element and marked by a propensity to sink and settle at the lower level instead of rising high and up like the air or fire elements. It has a tendency to pull down instead of giving a lift upwards. That is why these organs where the earth is a dominant element can't think for themselves, and are regarded as the grossest in the hierarchy of organs in the body. They are under the command and control of the mind-intellect as well as the five organs of perceptions. They depend upon their higher brethren to functions.] [5].

[Note--¹According to the philosophy of Vedanta, the *Akash* or space element referred above is the various spaces that encircle and envelop the entity that gives the sky or space its nomenclature. According to Vedanta, there are five types of subtle skies or spaces called 'Panchakash'. These five subtle skies encircle the following—(i) food 'sheath', (ii) vital air sheath, (iii) mental sheath, (iv) intellectual sheath, (v) and bliss sheath. Everything that exists does so in any one of these spaces. Every nook and corner where there is no solid or liquid is filled with space or 'Akash', which is a synonym of sky. It is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing.

That is, these three forms of the skies, the outer, the inner and that which is present inside the heart, are all the same; there is no distinction or demarcation or boundary or fundamental difference between any two skies. The apparent boundary or limitation imposed on the sky by the physical body or the membrane of the heart is only deceptive in nature. Once a person dies, for example, his body perishes, and the space present inside the heart merges indistinguishably with the space present inside the body when the body is cremated or decays when buried, and they together merge with the vast space present outside the body.

This verse outlines how the different parts of the body were formed from the primary elements in their descending order of subtlety, and ascending order of grossness.]

6. Gyan (truthful and incisive knowledge of reality), Sankalp (resolve, volition, determination, vows, aspirations), Nischaya (firmness of resolve and determination; certainty, surety, lack of doubt and ambiguity), Anusandhan (research and analysis; deep insight into anything), and Abhimaan (ego, pride, vanity, haughtiness, arrogance and hypocrisy)---these activities of a creature are 'done' (instigated, inspired, provoked) by the sky or space element, and they are the objects of the 'Antahakaran'. [That is, they are the objects on which the discriminatory intellect applies its wisdom and powers of discrimination. It is the subtle body of the creature consisting of the mind and intellect as well as the heart that inspires and propels it to make various determinations and have different aspirations based on its experience and information. The creature's intellect directs it towards any action when it is reasonably certain that it would be successful in its endeavours. First it makes a resolve, then it researches about it, is certain of its ability to successfully accomplish it based upon the knowledge gathered, and this fills it with pride of its capabilities and potentials. Since the 'sky' element controls his intellect, wisdom, mind, heart and the sense of pride as described in verse no. 5, it is deemed to have sway over the above virtues and characteristics of a creature.]

Samikaran (to strike a balance or maintain equilibrium in the body), Unnayan (to lift up, elevate, levitate, enhance), Grahan (to accept, hold, imbibe, grasp, catch, acknowledge), Srawan (to hear; the vibrations produced by sound in the ear), and Shwas (breath; inhalation and exhalation)—these are the activities done or controlled by the

‘wind’ element. They are the objects of the vital wind called Pran. [As described above in verse no. 5, all these functions of the body are controlled by the various vital winds present inside the body of the creature. The Pran is considered the principle wind in as much as all other winds have any relevance only till the time the creature is alive; they lose their importance and relevance when the Pran makes its exit from the body and the creature dies. This fact has been emphasised in a number of Upanishads, such as Chandogya, Brihad-Aranyaka amongst others.]

The various senses of perceptions of the body, such as to hear the spoken words or the sense of hearing, to feel anything or the sense of touch, to see anything or the sense of sight, to determine the taste of anything or the sense of taste, and to smell anything or the sense of smell—all these are the activities of the ‘fire’ element (because it is the fire element in the form of life-giving warmth, energy, stamina, vigour and vitality inherent in this element that enables the organs of perception to function and to put to effect these perceptions, as is obvious when we consider the case of a dead body which does not perceive anything). These perceptions or senses come under the jurisdiction of the organs of perception (such as the ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose respectively). All these senses of perception depend upon the ‘water’ element. [This is because the water element keeps the body well nourished and healthy to felicitate the proper functioning of these organs of perceptions. Water is present in many forms in the body, such as blood, lymph, mucous, enzymes, hormones etc., or all parts of the body that are not solids or dry like the bones and the skin. Therefore, the role that water plays in the body can never be underestimated.]

And finally, to speak, to give, to move, to excrete or eliminate the waste, and procreation or sexual gratification are the activities of the ‘earth’ element. These are the activities falling within the domain of the organs of action (such as the mouth, hand, leg, anus and genitals respectively).

The subjects pertaining to the organs of perception and organs of action are basically the same as those of the five ‘Tanmatras’ (the sense of various perceptions) and the five ‘Prans’ (vital wind forces) respectively. [The subjects pertaining to the organs of perceptions and the perceptions themselves are obviously the same. For instance, the eye has the perception of sight, and both have the same target—any object that has a physical shape, a form, a colour which can be ‘seen’. The ears and the perception of hearing also likewise have the target—any sound that can be heard. This applies to the other organs as well. Similarly, the five organs of action and the five vital winds are inter-related. These five organs function normally as long as the five winds perform normally. Should any of the winds fail to carry out its functions in a proper way, the corresponding organ would malfunction. For instance, if the Apaana wind dithers, the anus malfunctions. If the Pran fails, the speech becomes incoherent and the man stutters/stammers. If the Udaana wind loses its strength, the legs won’t lift the body. And so on and so forth.]

Similarly, memory, intelligence and thought (Chitta) as well as ego and pride (Ahankar) are inherent and an integral part of the intellect and mind (Buddhi and Mana) respectively. [The intellect is wise, erudite and enlightened, and therefore it does not have any sense of ego and pride, while the mind is under the influence of the information that it receives from the various sense organs of perception and responses of the organs of action, and therefore it feels proud of its capabilities and astounding potentials. Refer also to Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 7, Section 3-7 of the Sam Veda tradition.] [6].

[Note—There should be no confusion about what is being said in this verse. Basically it says that all the different functions of the body—from the subtlest such as functioning of the intellect, right up to the grossest such as the elimination of waste matter through the excretory organs—are manifestations of the inherent virtues to perform specific functions that are present in the five primary elements that came into existence. At the same time as controlling the functioning of the different units of the body, these elements themselves formed the body. So, since the body is a composite form of these five elements, the functions carried out by the different organs along with the unique characters, temperaments and inherent nature exhibited by the creature would indicate the proportion of the element that plays a dominant role in this creature's personal profile or personality as well as the functioning of each unit of its body. This is the reason why we have such a complex zoological kingdom where any one given class of animal has no resemblance with the other. Thus, by analyzing the characteristic features and behaviour of any given creature or even the functioning of any given unit of its body, we can deduce which of the five elements is dominant there.]

7. Avakash (literally meaning vacant space, where there is no activity; retirement), Vidhut (to move, to shake, to remove), Darshan (to see, to visualise, to have a glimpse, to perceive), Pindikaran (to combine everything into a homogenous rounded mass or ball or a spherical object to remove distinctions between different things), and Dharna (to bear, to have firm faith, conviction and belief)---these are the subtle forms that are the subjects of the five Tanmatras in their subtlest form (such as the sky, wind, fire, water and earth elements)¹ [7].

[Note—¹To understand the import of this verse, we must take into account verse no. 5 and 6 above. The *five Tanmatras* are the five senses of perception (hear, smell, taste, touch and see), and they all depend on the various organs of perception (ear, nose, tongue, skin and eye respectively) which are the gross manifestations of the five basic elements of creation (sky, wind, water, earth and fire respectively). The ears hear sound from the vast space surrounding the creature; the wind element enables one to move around; the fire element lights up the realm and enables the creature to see, while, at the same, time keeping the world warm, a factor most essential for life to thrive; the water element helps in dissolving everything uniformly without distinction, mixing all the ingredients into a homogenous mass or dough out of which a ball can be made, which in turn symbolises the primordial egg from which the whole cosmos evolved in due course; and the earth element which bears the burden of the entire creation and acts as its ground or base or foundation.]

8. Therefore, there are said to be twelve organs¹ through which the entire physical world has been revealed. The creation has been classified into three categories—Adhyatmic (the causal world pertaining to the Atma or spirit), Adhibhautic (the gross world visible around us on the earth), and Adhidaivic (the subtle world of the Gods).

There are twelve Gods such as the Moon, Brahma (the creator), Lokpals (the custodians of the different directions of the world), Vayu (the Wind God), the Sun, Varun (the Water God), Ashwini-kumars (the twin sons of the Sun God and regarded in mythology as the Gods' physician), Agni (the Fire God), Indra (the king of Gods; the controller of life giving rains), Upendra (Lord Vishnu, the sustainer), Prajapati (the care takers of the subjects of creation created by Brahma and responsible for carrying the

process of creation forward), and Yam (the Death God and who judges the creature after death).

They are the patron Gods of the twelve organs and they have their subtle abode in the twelve principal Naadis (nerves or veins or ducts or channels) of the body associated with these organs. These twelve Gods are also called the subtle parts of Pran or the vital wind which is synonymous with life or the Atma or pure consciousness of the creature². A person who is acquainted with the twelve organs, their gross and subtle forms as well as their patron Gods, is indeed considered to be learned, sagacious, wise and scholarly [8].

[Note---(1)¹The *twelve organs* referred to in the above verse are the following:-- the 6 organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue, skin) + 6 organs of action (mouth, hand, leg, anus, genital) + heart + mind = 12.

(2)² The *Gods* are the personifications of the various forces of Nature that govern life. Since the Atma is an embodiment of life as well as a synonym of life, these so-called Gods are an intrinsic and integral part of the Atma. They cannot be separated from the Atma even as the latter also cannot be separated from the former. Pran and the Atma are also synonyms; both coexist in the body of the creature, and its life depends equally upon both. Whereas the Atma is pure consciousness, the Pran is the vital wind, but the term consciousness is synonymous with life as much as the word Pran. Hence, these twelve Gods represent the Atma performing different functions in their forms; the Atma exercises control over the entire creation in its manifestation as these twelve Gods. The Atma is a composite of these Gods.]

9. [Now the sage describes how the five basic elements of creation called the 'Panch Bhuts' (the sky, air, fire, water, earth) are used in practice to create a perception of the world.]

The space is filled with air or wind. The latter has five forms—Samaan, Vyan, Udaan, Apaana and Pran. The Samaan wind helps in the perception of the spoken word in the form of sound heard through the ears. This sound or word is established in the space of the sky. All that is to be known or learnt by the intellect is done by means of hearing about it, and the organ that does it is the ear. The ear hears or picks up every bit of sound that it comes in contact with. It treats all sounds equally, and does not shut-off one in preference to the other. If the ears are closed, all sounds are eliminated. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the ears are the playing field or the field of activity of the Samaan wind. Since sound travels in open space, the importance of sky element is obvious if the ears have to hear anything. This Samaan wind coordinates the ears and the intellect because the latter would base its decisions on what it hears with the aid of the ears.

The Vyan wind is discerned as the sense of touch and is felt through the medium of the skin. It is established in the air around the body in the space filled with the wind element. The hands are especially empowered to feel this wind (i.e. the hands can 'feel' a thing better than any other part of the body—such as it being soft or hard, the feel of the texture of the object, and feel whether it is hot or cold etc.). The Mana (mind) gets the 'feel' or 'hang' of the world around it by 'feeling' it or 'touching' it with the hand. To get a better idea of anything, we tend to lift it and turn it over in our hands. The Mana derives greater degree of satisfactions when it holds and feels a thing than merely hearing about it or seeing it. The sense of touch and feel as perceived by the skin of the hand is a notch better than that perceived from any other part of the body. The Vyan wind coordinates the

working of the Mana and the perception of touch as exhibited by the hand and skin. This is because this wind is uniformly distributed all over the area where the body is covered by the skin.

The Udaan wind helps the eyes to see things that have a definite shape, size, contours and colour. This wind enables the legs to move and is established in the fire element (i.e. the energy required to move the body is predominantly located in the legs). When the eye sees something attractive, it inspires the legs to take the body there, and the legs move only when the Udaan wind wants. So, this wind coordinates the working of the eyes and the legs.

The Apaan wind helps the tongue to perceive the sense of taste, and it is present in the lower organs of the body (i.e. the alimentary canal) in the form of the water element. The water element predominates those places where this wind has a major role to play (as is evident from the fact that the tongue is always moist and it needs saliva to taste anything; the digestive juices present in the intestines are in liquid form; the semen is a fluid as is the urine, the latter two being the produce of the genitals and the excretory organs which ironically have a common exit; the stool in the rectum is also semi-solid, indicating the presence of water). If the Apaan wind and the water element do not work in a coordinated fashion, the intake of food, its digestion and excretion would be badly affected. Besides it, if the body does not get proper nourishment, its memory and ability to focus on the job at hand, to study and contemplate etc. take a beating. The attention is diverted and a man gets restless if the flatus gets incarcerated in the intestines; the man feels bloated and hypochondriac. In other words, the functioning of the 'Chitta', i.e. the ability of the mind to stay attentive and fix its self on the job at hand, the perception of taste which enables one to enjoy the food eaten and therefore in better secretion of digestive juices, the movement of food in the intestines and its excretion, as also the production of semen (genital fluids), its movement and its proper implantation in the female organs—all depend upon and are coordinated by the Apaan wind.

Finally, the Pran wind reveals itself in the nose (as breath) and helps it to exhibit the ability to smell. Its other habitat is the anus where the earth element is present in the form of faecal matter (stool). The Pran is synonymous with life as also is food, because life cannot be sustained without either the Pran or the food. Food is produced from earth. Therefore, food and earth are to be treated equally as the fifth element. A wise and erudite person is one who knows this. The nose is able to smell two genres of smells—one that is pleasant such as the aroma of delicious food or the sweet fragrance of flowers, and the other that is foul such as the stinking wind coming out of the anus. The ability to smell is controlled by the Pran wind (breath present in the nose), while at the same time this Pran is a metaphor for the life-sustaining basic ingredients and nourishment present in any food item. Food is grown on earth. The gross part of food from which all nutrients have been extracted by the body accumulates in the rectum. Hence, this food, as excreta, is called 'night soil' or 'night earth', where the word 'night' would stand for something from which life has been removed or extracted, something that is gross in nature. Since such excreta (which is food minus Pran) accumulates in the anus and rectum, the latter are said to be dominated by the earth element simply because food has its natural habitat in the earth. Pran is the wind that coordinates the functioning of life in this creation through the medium of the food, and it lives on earth in the form of all life forms that exist.] [9].

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Canto 2

1. In the above context, there is a Shloka (a verse) propounding the doctrine that says all the elements –such as the Antakaran (the subtle sky), wind, fire, taste (the water element) and anus (the earth element)-- have sixteen ‘Kalaas’ or fractions or subtle parts each. The first half of any given one element and the different fractions of other elements in varying proportions are clumped together to form the various gross organs of the creature [1].

[Note—Each primary Bhut or element is divided into sixteen parts or fractions. These elements form the organs of the body. Therefore, one half of each organ would be deemed to consist of half part of the principal element, i.e. eight parts of the principal element, and the other half is made up of different fractions taken from the remaining four elements as outlined below in verse no. 2.]

2. Each gross organ has one half of it made up of the principal subtle element that dominates that particular organ, and the remaining half consists of one fourth fraction of the second half of each of all the remaining subtle elements [2].

[Note--- For example, verse no. 9 of canto 1 tells us that the anus has the earth element in predominance. It means that the anus, which is the organ of excretion, has one half part made of the earth element while the other half consists of one fourth part of the second half of the other remaining four elements—viz. space, air, water and fire. That is, if we analyse the constituent ingredients of the anus which is deemed to be divided into 16 parts, we will find that half of it, i.e. 8 parts, consist of the earth element, while the other half of 8 parts consists of $\frac{1}{4}^{\text{th}}$ of one half part of each of the remaining four elements. That means, the second half of the anus consists of 2 fractions ($\frac{1}{4}$ of 8 = 2) each of the sky, air, fire and water elements. Thus the configuration of the anus would in effect be as follows—8 parts earth + 2 parts sky + 2 parts air + 2 parts fire + 2 parts water = 16 parts.]

3. The fraction or part of the subtle elements revealed in the form of the gross organs of the upper half of the body of the creature should be treated as subtler as compared to the lower half which is grosser in nature. This way, all that exists consists of both the subtle and the gross aspects of creation mixed together in varying degrees of subtlety and grossness. There is no clear-cut demarcation or dividing line. The transition from one element to another is imperceptible and smooth [3].

[Note—Its easy to imagine this scenario. If we mix two or more liquids of different colours and density in a jar, stir the mixture vigorously and let the jar stand, the heavier or grosser liquid will settle at the bottom while the lightest liquid will rise up to the top. The liquid with medium density will occupy the central part. Transition from one colour to another will be also smooth and gradual, until the time the whole mixture acquires a new identity of its own which is very different from the original ingredients that were mixed. There will be no clear-cut and sharp dividing line to separate one liquid from the other, and the slightest movement or jerk of the jar would disturb the equilibrium between the different liquids and mix them all up. If we extend this example to the earth, we will understand why the earth consists of so many layers or strata. The only difference is that the earth is solid and its strata are fixed as compared to the liquids in the jar.]

4. Hence all the 'Bhuts' (elements) depend upon each other for their existence. Even the grossest element earth consists of the other more subtle elements as described in verse no. 2 and 3 above. Though the earth appears to be primarily gross and inanimate, it nevertheless has a subtle aspect, a conscious principle that is inherently and intrinsically present in it. That is, 'consciousness' is as integral part of earth as it is of the animate creatures that inhabit the earth, move over it, reproduce over it and sustained by it [4].

[Note—The fire element is an integral part of earth, and so is the water, air and sky. Fire is synonymous with life, and so are the other elements. It is a well established fact that earth is the foundation upon which the whole of the edifice of the visible creation rests and finds sustenance. The earth can actually foster life, and it is only possible if it has this potential 'consciousness' in the form of all the five elements. Only that which is 'living and inherently conscious' can sustain and foster intelligent life. Not only fire but all other elements such as water, air and sky need earth to have their existence made meaningful.]

5. It is because the earth has subtle consciousness (as described above that it is not fully gross and dead and inane, and neither is it inert and inactive), it produces or creates or exhibits the myriad, multidimensional signs of life, such as creation or production of herbs, food, all the four forms of life¹, the juices (or the nourishing and refreshing fluids that create and sustain life), blood, flesh, bones, stomach, sperms and the like [5].

[Note---¹All the four forms of life on the earth have their origin in a *panda*, which is an embryo shaped roughly like a rounded ball, and hence the name 'pinda' meaning a rounded mass of any matter. That is why the earth is 'round' like a ball or Pinda. It is an embryo that harbours life in all its vibrant forms. The four forms of life based on this earth and dependent on it are the following:-- (a) Swadej or those born from sweat, such as lice, bacteria etc. (b) Andaj or those born from an egg, such as birds, (c) Udjbhij or those born from seeds, such as plants, and (d) Jarayuj or those born from an embryo inside the womb of the mother, such as animals and humans.]

6. The union or clubbing together of these basic elements in different ratios and proportions results in the possibility of creation of so many 'cells' which are harbingers of different forms of life that the basic elements assume. The 'Anna-maye Pinda' (the food sheath or that cell or microcosmic body which is based on the food element) is present in the region of the navel¹ [6].

[Note--(1) ¹That is the reason why an embryo developing in a mother's womb draws its nourishment through a duct called placenta attached to the navel of the foetus. This placenta is the food pipe of the developing creature.]

7. In the centre of this 'Anna-Pinda' is the heart which is shaped like a lotus flower having a stem. In the core of this heart is present that 'conscious Lord' (the Atma or soul or pure consciousness) in whom the element of Ahankar (pride) that he is a 'Karta' (doer of deeds) is to be found. That is, the conscious factor present at the core of a creature's existence is defined as the Lord of the creature because that consciousness called 'Chetna' is the only conscious and enlightened authority and the highest seat of power that controls and drives the rest of the setup. This authority is the true identity of the creature and is also known as the Atma. Though basically wise, this Atma or the virtual

Lord of the creature erroneously thinks, under the influence of delusions and ignorance, that it does the various deeds and takes actions through the medium of the body. This conception or idea that it is the one that exclusively does everything, that it does this or that, or that it is the only entity capable, competent and authorised to do this and that, fills it with false pride and ego. It thinks 'I am a doer'. This is Ahankar. It makes it arrogant and haughty [7].

[Note---It would be noted here that this happens when ignorance and delusions, called Maya, cast a dark shadow upon the creature. By the word 'creature', the true identity is referred to. The situation can be compared to a man who sees the world through a tainted glass; his vision of the world would be influenced by the colour of the glass. It would not matter if he is learned or a stupid; he would not be able to even realise that he is being taken for a ride when he decides that the world has such and such colour (character). So when the Atma is under the influence of ignorance, it loses sight of the Truth and Reality.]

8. The seed for this Ahankar, or the root cause from which ego, pride, vanity and arrogance sprouts or generates, lies in 'Moha' (ignorance, delusions, false attachments). It is a negative trait symbolising a sphere of darkness induced by ignorance, and is very gross by nature. The throat is its special habitat though it is present everywhere in the world, clumped to other elements that constitute it [8].

[Note—A man's arrogant and haughty nature becomes evident when he speaks arrogantly and haughtily. That is why it is said that a foolish and ignorant man reveals himself when he speaks, and not if he keeps quiet, because his speech generated in his throat highlights the level of his stupidity.]

9. The most exalted citadel which is said to be the supreme habitat of the blissful Atma is in the head (i.e. in the intellect and mind). It is very powerful and it is that which throws light to illuminate the world. [That is, it is the mind which makes the Atma aware of the world.] [9].

[Note—The Atma is usually depicted as having its abode in the lotus-like heart. The head is, on the other hand, said to be the abode of Brahm. These two sites have great symbolic importance. While the Atma may be sentimental or emotional as it lives in the heart which is characterised by these virtues, the Brahm is never so; it is always wise and rational as is indicated by its abode in the head (brain) where the intellect and mind also have their seat. Brahm and Atma are however synonymous with each other; they are the two sides of the same coin. What Brahm is at the macrocosmic level, the Atma is at the micro level. So, while Atma is blissful, the supreme Atma is more so, it is more blissful in its form as Brahm. This observation means that if the heart relies upon the guidance of the mind-intellect, the creature would find peace and true happiness.]

10. The 'Jagrat', or the waking state of consciousness, dominates the worldly life of a creature and is found everywhere around it. The 'Swapna', or the dream state, has a subtle presence in the former. [This is because (a) what is visible in this world while a creature is awake is actually like a mirage in a desert; it is false, illusionary and deluding; it is like a dream in the true sense, and (b) stimuli received by the brain while a creature is awake acts like a data bank for the memory, or the sub-conscious, upon which a creature's dreams are based.]

The other two states—deep sleep and Turiya—have nothing to do with this gross world because in these two states of existence, the mind-intellect cease to function and interfere with the pure consciousness [10].

11. In all the habitats (i.e. in all the places and all the bodies of all the creatures), this Atma, which is like Shiva (literally one that is pure, holy, auspicious, wise, enlightened, truthful and eternal), is uniformly and universally present in the world as the all-pervading, omnipresent and omniscient Being even as juice is uniformly and equally distributed inside a fruit [11].

[Note—In other words, the pure consciousness is equally present in the humblest of creature such as an insect as it is present in the mighty elephant. It is universally present in all living entities in creation, without any exception. This is like the uniform distribution of sap or juice in any given ripe fruit; it cannot be said that one part of it has a greater density of juice than the other part.]

12. The ‘Anna-maye Kosh’ (the food sheath) encloses the other four sheaths of a creature. The consciousness assumes a form which concurs with the relevant sheath. This concurrence makes the supreme and uncorrupt Atma appear to be like that particular sheath [12].

[Note—(1) The various sheaths act like covers or veils around the Atma, the pure consciousness and the true ‘self’ of all living beings. Out of the various sheaths, the ‘food sheath’ is the outermost layer. It encloses the following four sheaths—(a) vital air sheath, (b) mental sheath, (c) intellect sheath, and (d) bliss sheath. The Atma is located at the core of the bliss sheath.

(2) The Atma, which is the ‘true self’ of the creature and its real identity, interacts with the external world as long as the creature lives in it. In this process, the Atma has to go through these sheaths because they intervene between the Atma and the world. Each sheath or veil or covering reflects its character and casts its shadow upon the Atma, thereby making the latter appear tinged or tainted with those characteristics which are typical for that particular sheath/covering/veil. It’s like looking through a coloured glass; the sight is bound to be affected by the glass’s colour.]

13. The only difference between a ‘Jiva’ (a living mortal creature) and ‘Shiva’ (the eternal, immortal Supreme Being personifying the ultimate Truth) is that the former has various faults while the latter is faultless. The various ‘Koshas’ (sheaths, coverings or veils) are the progenitors or all the faults associated with a creature and all its states of existence [13].

14. Even as the churning of milk produces foam or froth on its surface, the numerous agitations that churn the mind create so many distractions, diversions, perplexities and confusions for it [14].

15. ‘Actions and deeds’ create a sense of being a ‘doer’ and the notion of ‘doing’, while elimination of actions and deeds gives peace and tranquility to the creature. When the mind moves downwards in its thinking level (i.e. when it becomes lowly, mean, corrupted and selfish in its outlooks), it resembles the sun moving south of the equator (i.e. the summer solstice). That is, when the mind gets bogged down by agitations and buffeted by confusions and perplexities created by delusions and ignorance, it loses its

calm and poise even as the south bound sun causes temperatures to rise and cause uneasiness and discomfort in the world [15].

16. When the eternal Shiva (the supreme and truthful Lord) is covered by the basic fault of 'Ahankar' (pride, ego, vanity, arrogance and the sense of superiority), he gets degraded or demoted to become a 'Jiva' (a worldly creature). Here, as a creature, he becomes shrouded or veiled by a cloud of delusions and ignorance which collectively form his 'Prakriti' (i.e. his inherent temperaments, tendencies and natural habits) which drive all his actions and deeds. The combined effect of ignorance and the basic nature that he assumes as a creature make him forget about his exalted original form, and instead encase him in a shell of 'Moha' (attachments, endearments, infatuations and longings for the world and its innumerable attractions). That is, he is covered and overcome by the net of delusions and attachments which are the hallmarks of this entrapping world of magnificent charms, material comforts and sensual pleasures [16].

[Note---If the supreme Lord can come to this state because of pride and ego, just imagine what can happen to an ordinary creature who is prone to all sorts of faults. The Upanishadic teachings should be understood in a broad perspective. This verse emphasises the importance of humility and the ill effects of pride. The hard to crack 'Moha' overcomes a creature only if he allows Ahankar ridden-and-driven Prakriti to get the better of him. Refer also to Subalo-panishad, Canto 9, verse no. 13 for more detail.]

17. Becoming a slave of his 'Vasanas' (literally the various passions and desires pertaining to this world and its material objects, and deriving self gratification from them), he has to enter thousands of wombs and lies there sleeping in utter ignorance. He is like a fish which tosses about between the two banks of a river without finding rest anywhere [17].

18. In due course of time when circumstances turn in his favour, he gets wisdom and realises his true nature (or he becomes enlightened about his pure conscious Atma as his true identity). With this enlightenment, he symbolically heads 'North' which is a metaphoric way of saying 'upliftment of the soul'. This is an endeavour towards self realisation and emancipation. As a result, instead of perpetually tossing about in the world as a mortal creature in different births, he migrates to a higher state which will enable and empower him to break free from this endless cycle of birth and death [18].

19. After that (i.e. when self awareness dawns upon him), he establishes his 'Pran' (the vital wind force of life) in the head region and gets engrossed in doing Yoga (contemplation and meditation). Yoga helps in attaining Gyan (enlightenment), while the latter inspires and propels the aspirant towards the former. Both are complimentary to each other [19].

20. An aspirant Yogi (ascetic; spiritual aspirant) who remains committed, sincere and diligent in his search of the truthful knowledge is never degraded or demoted from his higher and exalted stature. He is deemed to have (posses) that deep and penetrating insight that enables one to see the supreme, transcendental 'Shiva' in the midst of all the faults associated with the world, but such a person does not see any fault with that Supreme Being himself [20].

[Note—Here the supreme Brahm is called *Shiva* because the word defines all the characteristic features of Brahm—such as the virtues of truthfulness, eternity, auspiciousness, blessedness, wisdom, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, purity, beauty etc. A true Yogi would have acquired sufficient degree of enlightenment and the ability to see behind the external façade to find out the secret truth. He can peep behind the veil or shroud that has covered the genuine truth, and unravel its secrets. He realises that the supreme Brahm, who is called Shiva because he has divine eclectic virtues as noted here, is not what he appears to be when seen with the ordinary eyes of the body in his Maya-ridden manifestation of this creation. What is externally visible is a completely distorted and tainted view or idea of Brahm. Actually, none of the faults or shortcomings associated with this deluding and artificial world have anything to do with the ‘real’ Brahm; what one usually knows or witnesses is a ‘conditioned’ Brahm—a Brahm conditioned by such factors as Ahankar, Prakriti and Maya. Obviously, this is not the ‘true, genuine’ form of Brahm, for the latter is absolutely immaculate, pristine pure and untainted. Besides this, Brahm is Truth personified, and is attributeless. Say, how can Truth be more than one, how can it be so varied and multifarious as this visible world apparently is, and how can it have so many attributes when it is supposed to be attributeless?]

21. An excellent Yogi is one who contemplates and meditates upon the supreme Brahm which has no faults, with utmost devotion and commitment. A person who does not have this wisdom cannot be successful in his spiritual practices [21].

22. The mind should be controlled and harnessed by exercising restraint over the vital wind called ‘Pran’ with the aid of persistent Yoga (meditation) exercises. An ascetic should endeavour to cut through the fetters of ignorance with the help of firm resolve and a sharp intellect which should be potent and sharp as the edge of a knife [22].

23. The flame of truthful knowledge and genuine enlightenment is lit with the aid of diligently pursuing the principles of Yoga having eight branches. Yoga, which is a spiritual endeavour, has two main paths—Gyan Yoga and Karma Yoga, meaning the path of knowledge and the path of deeds and actions respectively [23].

24. Oh exalted Brahmin! Now I shall describe ‘Kriya Yoga’ or ‘Karma Yoga’ (the philosophy dealing with doing deeds as a means of spiritual fulfillment) to you. A Yogi whose mind-intellect complex is free from agitations never falls and gets trapped in the net cast by false, transient and misleading material comforts and gratifications provided by the sensual objects of the world [24].

25—28. Oh exalted Brahmin! This dual Yoga (Gyan and Karma) can be understood as follows. The ‘righteous path of doing deeds’ is to keep the mind engaged in doing them as and when they come along, and as required or demanded by given circumstances, but should be auspicious as well as deemed fit and proper as per the righteous requirements of one’s duty and obligations, subject to the proper sanction/permission of the scriptures. The ‘path of acquiring truthful knowledge and enlightenment’ is to keep the mind focused on spiritual enhancement and moral upliftment inspite of detractions and numerous hurdles that come along. This enables an aspirant to attain success in acquiring spiritual powers.

These two paths help the Yogi to break free from all the fetters that shackle his mind to this world [25-26].

With such an enlightened view of Yoga, the wise aspirant is able to attain the supreme Shiva who makes him completely fulfilled. A person, who follows these two paths of Yoga with a pure mind and sincere commitment, is able to achieve success in getting emancipation and deliverance from the horrors of the world.

Further, to have total dispassion towards this perishable body and its organs is called 'Yam', or self-restraint, by the wise ones [27-28].

29. 'Niyam', literally meaning regular and diligent practice of spiritual tenets with devotion and consistency, is to have constant, consistent and persistent devotion and endearment towards the essential and ultimate Truth which is supreme and transcendental, irrefutable and unequivocal (and which is known as 'Brahm').

The best 'Asan' (pronounced as "Aasan"), or sitting posture, is to have total and sincere dispassion towards, be detached from and remain indifferent to all the objects of this material world [29].

[Note—The word 'Asan' means to 'come and sit comfortably'. One can sit with ease only when his mind and body are rested and peaceful. One cannot sit still if there is physical discomfort or the mind remains fidgety due to a variety of reasons. He would, for example, glance surreptitiously here and there, prick his nose, scratch his body, shift positions, or even fall asleep. This is not true Asan. So, to sit in Asan implies that total self control is practiced, and this is possible when both the mind and the body become oblivious of the surrounding world and its disturbing impulses.]

30. 'Pranayam' (pronounced as "Praanaayaam"), literally meaning to exercise control over breath and other vital winds of the body, is to be perpetually aware of the illusionary and false nature of this world. 'Pratyahar', (pronounced as "Pratyaahaar") literally referring to the control of the mind, is to divert mind-intellect away from the external world, and instead focus it in contemplation, to turn it inwards and direct its efforts in the search of the Atma, to inspire it towards contemplation and meditation on the absolute Truth in this creation, to be quiet, tranquil both externally and internally, and to abandon extrovert tendencies of the mind. (See also verse no.130 for elaboration on Pratyahar) [30].

31. 'Dharna' (pronounced as "Dhaarnaa"), literally meaning to have a firm belief, conviction and faith, is to have an unwavering, stable and steadfast mind and intellect. 'Dhyan', is to contemplate, meditate, focus the attention on something, and to ponder constantly upon the fact that 'I am an image of that pure consciousness'. (See also verse no. 134 in this context) [31].

32-34. 'Samadhi' (pronounced as "Samaadhi"), literally to be in a perpetual trance like state of bliss and be oblivious of the external world, is to completely forget about everything, even that one has forgotten anything at all.

Non-violence, truthfulness, non stealing, celibacy, continence or abstinence from sexual indulgences and other pervert activities of the body and mind, mercy and compassion, simplicity and humility (32),---

---forgiveness, patience and fortitude, restrained eating, and purity of mind, intellect and body—these are regarded as the ten supreme ‘Yams’. ‘Tapa’, meaning austerity, penance, sufferance and hardships endured for some noble cause, ‘Santosh’, meaning contentedness and satiety, to have belief on the doctrines and teachings of the scriptures, to make charities and donations, the remembrance of the supreme Lord known as ‘Hari’ and devotedly serving him and contemplating upon him (33),---

---hearing Vedanta (the preaching of Upanishads), to have modesty, honour, dignity, self respect and shame, to have wisdom and intelligence, to repeat the holy Mantras or divine, ethereal words of the Lord, and to keep stern religious vows and observe fasting—these are ten ‘Niyams’.

Oh Brahmin! Now the various sitting postures called ‘Asans’, such as ‘Swastik’ and others are being described (34).

35. The sitting posture called ‘Swastik Asan’ is one in which a person sits cheerfully in an erect position, with the sole of one foot lying against the center of the thigh of the opposite leg (35).

36. To sit steady and erect so that the legs are bent inwards at the knees and the left ankle bones are placed to the right side of the spine while the right ankle bones are to the left side, is called ‘Gomukh Asan’ because this is how a cow sits. [The body is held erect. The left hand is taken to the back and it hooks itself to the right hand which has been brought to the back by lifting it and crossing it over the right shoulder. The fingers of both the hands are bent inwards towards the palms, and then they hook each other behind the middle of the spine.] [36].

37. To sit steady and erect with the legs bent inwards from the knee so that the lower part of a leg (i.e. the calf or the shank) is tucked or pressed under the thigh of the same leg, and the buttocks rest on the heels of the upturned feet resting flat on the ground with their soles pointing upwards from the rear of the buttocks—this sitting posture is known as ‘Virasan’, or the way a warrior should sit.

[There is a variation of this posture in which both the legs are not folded in; only the right leg is closed in, while the left leg is bent at approximate 90^0 at the knee and its sole lies flat on the ground. The body is thus supported by one leg fully bent at the knee and one leg at 90^0 at the knee.] [37].

38. To sit steady and erect so that the heel of the right leg is placed to the left side of the anus (under the buttocks) and the heel of the left leg is placed to the right side of the anus, is called ‘Yogasan’. This is what those who are expert in Yoga (meditation) say [38].

39. To sit cross-legged so that the upper part of the foot (i.e. the opposite side of the sole) along with the toes of one leg is placed on the thigh of the opposite leg (i.e. left toes on the right thigh, and right toes on the left thigh), is called Padmasan (literally to sit in a lotus posture). [The soles would be pointing outwards while resting on the thighs and the body would be held erect—i.e. the spine, neck and head would be in a straight line. The hands, with palms facing upwards and resting one on the top of the other, are placed on the folded legs in front of and below the navel. The chin is drawn in and held tightly near the base of the Adam’s apple at the pit of the throat. This sitting posture is said to

dispel/ameliorate all diseases, and counter or antidote all poisons. That is, this sitting posture is very beneficial for the body.] [39].

40. A 'Baddha Padmasan' (literally, a closed or tied form of Padmasan) is when, after sitting in a normal or common form of Padmasan posture (as described in verse no. 39), the big toe of the left foot is held by the right hand, and that of the right foot is held by the left hand. [In this posture, the hands are taken behind the back, and the clasping of the toe of the opposite side is done from behind. To felicitate this posture, the spine will have to be curved backwards a bit. The hands and legs are virtually 'bound or tied' to each other. That is why it is called 'Baddha' or tied or closed form of Padmasan.] [40].

41. A 'Kukutta Asan' (literally, to sit like a cock) is when, after sitting in a normal Padmasan posture (as described in verse no. 39), both the hands are passed under the legs through the gap between the calf and the thigh of the respective side, the palms are spread out on the ground and the body is lifted up (levitated) on the straightened hands with the open palms and its fingers acting as pedestals on which the body appears to be mounted [41].

42. A 'Kurmasan' (literally to sit like a tortoise) is the next higher Asan after the Kukutta Asan. In this case, the two shoulders are virtually tied or clasped by the hands (whereas in Kukutta Asan the hands were thrust through closed or folded legs). [To do this Kurma Asan, the legs are stretched out but slightly bent at the knee, the hands are passed from under the leg of the respective side and then bent upwards from elbow joint to be taken towards the shoulder of the same side. The neck is bent forward towards the ground sufficiently enough to enable the two hands to clasp each other from behind the nape of the neck. In this position, the back would be bent forward to be almost parallel to the ground, the legs outstretched, chin almost touching the ground in front, and the hands clasped behind the neck. Seen from the front, this posture resembles a tortoise, and hence the name.] [42].

43. A 'Dhanush Asan' (literally, a posture resembling a stringed bow) is when the big toes of the feet are clasped by the hands, the body stretched and bent forwards while the legs are slightly curved upwards. This makes the body appear like a stringed bow [43].

[Note—There is another version of this 'bow-like' Asan. According to it, instead of bending forward and clasping the toes while sitting on the ground, one lies down flat on the ground and the body is curved (arched) backwards in a bow like shape so that the front of the abdomen appears to be in a parabolic or concave bowl shape. The legs are lifted up and bent towards the head from behind the back, while almost simultaneously the head and upper part of the body are also lifted up and the hands are taken over and behind the shoulders to clasp the toe of the leg of the same side. This clasping would obviously be at the back of the body. When viewed from the side, the body would appear to be like a stringed bow, and hence the name 'Dhanush Asan'.]

44. A 'Singhasan or Singh Asan' (literally, to sit like a lion) is to sit in a posture so that the 'siwani', or the fold of skin between the anus and the genitals, called the suture, is pressed by the ankle bones of the opposite side, and the body is lowered on the legs which are bent or folded in from the knees, while the hands are stretched out and the open

palms are placed on the bent knee of the same side so that the fingers stretch out like a palm-fan with the open palm resting on the bent knee joint. [Usually in this posture, the mouth is wide open and the tongue protrudes out, while the eyes glare at some point in the distance or at the tip of the nose. This is how a lion sits, and hence the name. This posture makes the body resemble a sitting lion. This is a posture adored by ascetics (Yogis) and it is dedicated to the memory of Lord Narsingh, the half man and half lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu to liberate his great child devotee Prahalad from the torments inflicted upon him by his own demon father. Amongst the benefits of this Aasan is that it clears the voice and removes foul breath.] [44].

45. A 'Bhadrasan or Bhadra Asan' (literally, to sit like a gentleman) is to sit in an erect posture by placing the two ankle joints under the buttocks on either side of the suture, i.e. the junction point of the testicles and the anus such that they (the two ankle joints) touch each other, and then using the hands to firmly clasp the soles of the feet of the respective side from the rear side of the buttock (i.e. left foot by the left hand, and the right foot by the right hand). [This posture can neutralise the ill effects of all diseases which cause the production of toxins in the body, or which are caused in the body by taking external poisons or other kinds of toxins; it helps to get rid of diseases as well.] [45].

46. A 'Muktasan or Mukta Asan' (literally, the posture that gives liberation and deliverance) is when the ankle bones of one side of the body are placed under the buttock of the opposite side of the suture joint. The foot is either held at right angles to the ground with its sole pointing outward and the toe pointing inwards, such that the body is held erect on the toes of the legs which would now act as pedestals to support the weight of the body.

There is a variation of this Asan. In this, the foot is not held at right angles to the ground but upturned and placed flat on it under the buttocks so that the sole points upwards from behind the buttocks, and the body rests on the legs bent tightly inwards and tucked under the buttocks. In this sitting position, the heels would be pressing against the buttocks from below on either side of the suture. [Refer verse no. 37.] [46].

47-52. A 'Mayurasan or Mayur Asan' (literally, to sit like a peacock) entails putting the palms flat on the ground, pressing the elbows against the abdomen on either side of the navel, and then balancing the body in a horizontal plane with the hands and open palms resting flat on the ground to act as pedestals (47). In this posture, the head and the legs are turned upwards and away from the ground. This posture resembles the outline features of a peacock. [This 'Mayurasan' has the potential to destroy all sins.]

A 'Matsyaasan or Matsya Asan' (literally, to sit like a fish) is done (by lying on the back on the ground and) bending the right leg at the knee joint and resting the foot on the left leg at the point where the thigh joins the abdomen (i.e. at the pelvic girdle). Then the big toe of this right leg is grasped by the hands. (For this, the body will have to be curved slightly backwards along the spine so that the hands can reach the toe). [The left leg is similarly bent and its foot placed on the right thigh at its upper end. The toe of the left leg is also grasped by the hand to ensure that both the legs and their foot are symmetrically and properly placed. The hands are then taken behind the head, bent at the elbow joints, and then the two elbows are clasped by the fingers of the opposite hand.

Thus, the hands would form a square or rectangular enclosure around the head. The previously curved body is allowed to lower itself and lie flat on the ground. This posture resembles a fish, and therefore the name Matsya Asan (48 ½).

A 'Siddhasan or Siddha Asan' (literally, a posture that bestows mystical powers, or a posture that only accomplished experts can do) is when the ankle of the left foot is tucked under the suture (which is a fold of skin between the anus and the testicles) and the right foot is placed on the top of the genitals. The body is kept erect in this posture. To sit in this posture, the two legs are first stretched out. The left leg is then bent at the knee and folded in so that the heel touches the genitals and the sole lies flat against the inner thighs of the right leg. Then the right leg is folded in and the heel is placed in front of the pubic bone right above the testicles, and the sole touches the inner thigh of the previously folded left leg. The two hands are stretched out and the outer side of the wrist of each hand is placed on the bent knee joint of the respective side. The palm is opened and the thumb is touched by the bent first finger to form a virtual ring, with the remaining three fingers held out straight. The practitioner sits perfectly in a ram-rod straight position, with the spine, the neck and the head in a straight line. The mental sight is fixed on a spot in front of the nose, and this state of intense concentration is maintained as long as is feasible for the practitioner. Then the legs are gradually unfolded, and after some period of relaxation the process is repeated with the opposite leg being folded in first and placed below the other leg. [It is believed that this posture is one of the best postures to be adopted for Yoga amongst the eighty four lakh (84×10^5) postures of meditation. The fact that there are as many numbers of Asans as there are species of living beings is endorsed by Dyanbindu Upanishad, verse no. 42 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. This Siddha Asan is capable of cleansing all the seventy two thousand Naadis (ducts in the body), and is so-called because it is possible to access the divine source of cosmic energy trapped inside the body as well as experience the cosmic power of the kindled Spirit by employing this Asan. The word 'Siddha' implies one who has acquired stupendous mystical and supernatural powers that are beyond the parameters of the physical and mundane world.] (49 ½).

A 'Paschimotan Asan' (literally that posture that marks the setting of the sun in the western horizon) is when the legs are stretched out straight on the ground, the big toes are clasped by the hands, and the head is placed on the two knees that touch each other. Obviously, the body would have to bend forward at the waist (50 ½).

A 'Sukhasan or Sukha Asan' (literally that posture which gives comfort and is easy for the aspirant to do) is one which is comfortable for an aspirant. If it is not possible to adopt other postures (as described in previous verse nos. 35-50 ½) for any reason whatsoever, then one should sit in whatever posture or position that is comfortable and convenient for him. A person who has obtained expertise in these various sitting postures or Asans is deemed to have won control over the three legendary worlds (i.e. the subterranean, the terrestrial and the celestial worlds which correspond to the nether world, the mortal world, and the heavenly world) in a symbolic manner (52). [47-52].

[Note—Verse nos. 35-52 describe the various Asans which are sixteen in number. One should also refer to Jabal-darshan Upanishad, canto 3 of the Sam Veda tradition in this connection.]

53. One should diligently follow the tenets of 'Yam and Niyam', and practice the various 'Asans' to be able to exercise proper control over the self. When he is able to exercise

control over his body, he should then endeavour to cleanse or de-clog the different 'Naadis' or the tubular ducts/channels inside the body. [The Naadis are the various nerves and veins, or the ducts and channels of the body, that carry energy, vitality and stimuli as well as blood and nutrition to various parts of the body.] To do this, he should practice 'Pranayam', literally the controlling of the breath and other vital wind forces circulating in the body. [For Pranayam, see verse nos. 92-95 below.] [53].

54. The length of a man's body measures approx. ninety-six fingers put one on the top of the other. [That is, the height of an average man is roughly the width of ninety-six fingers.] It is said that 'Pran'(the vital wind that supports life) has a measurement which is twelve fingers more than the measurement of the body (i.e. the Pran is $96+12 = 108$ fingers in dimension) [54].

[Note—Refer Shandilya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, section 4, verse no. 2.]

55. The various winds present in the body should be heated, mixed and made light by the aid of the heating done by the 'fire element' inherently present in the body. This heating and mixing is done with the help of Yoga exercises. [As a result, the vital winds mix with each other and become homogenous. As a matter of fact, the word Yoga means to bring about a union between two things; to join two or more things and establish a harmony between them.] This would empower one to be able to acquire awareness of the supreme Brahm [55].

[Note—Briefly according to Yoga discipline, when the breath is held by the process of *Pranayam*, the vital winds of the body get heated. As warm air is lighter, it has a tendency to rise up in the body. Further, the process also envisions that a coiled subtle energy center in the body called the *Kundalini* is also aroused by Pranayam. This Kundalini has trapped cosmic energy, and once the vital winds are heated, they activate this center and release the energy. The latter then snakes up the spine to reach the top of the head where the subtle but sublime and supreme Brahm is said to reside. The heated air moves around and swirls in the top of the head, and consequentially bristles and stimulates the different areas of the brain and massage the nerves, giving rise to a sense of bliss and peace which are feelings associated with Brahm realisation.]

56-57. In a human body, at the center of it, there is said to be a triangular spot which is the place of the 'fire element' in the body. It glows like hot, molten gold. In 4-legged animals (56),---

---this subtle fire-place in the body has four corners (i.e. it is square in shape). In the birds, it is rounded in shape. In serpents and other reptiles, it has six corners (i.e. it is hexagonal). And in those creatures born from sweat or moisture (e.g. lice, bacteria), it is 8-cornered (i.e. it is octagonal).

All these subtle but powerful 'fire places' glow and are radiant like an actually blazing fire (57).

58. In a human body, that fire place has a body called the 'Kand' (a root like structure resembling a carrot or a radish). It is nine fingers width in length. The upper brightest part

of the Kand is like a lighted lamp which is four fingers width in diameter and four fingers width in height [58].

59. In reptiles, birds and 4-legged animals, this Kand is rounded in shape. The top central part of this Kand is circular in shape and is called 'Nabhi' (literally the navel) (59).

60. Here there is a serrated wheel having twelve teeth on its outer edge (resembling a circular saw). On the edges of these teeth are established images of Vishnu and other Gods. This subtle and symbolic serrated cog-wheel, called a 'Chakra', is turned by the powers of 'Maya' that virtually surrounds the Atma or the pure self of the creature. [This Maya is a metaphor for the various delusions arising out of ignorance about the actual 'truth' that keep the creature going round and round in a cycle of birth and death by keeping him trapped in this wheel which rotates perpetually once it is set in motion by this Maya. According to Vedanta, the true identity of a creature is not its body but its Atma, which has its habitat in the causal body, so called because it is the 'cause' of everything that exists in this world. This Atma is an ethereal entity, and it is surrounded by the various Vasanas and Vrittis¹ (i.e. the different passions, desires and yearnings as well as natural temperaments, habits and inclinations of a creature) which have their foundation in Maya². Under illusions, the creature thinks that there are so many Gods, like there being twelve Gods such as Vishnu and others in this particular instance. The creature, in its true identity as the Atma, sits at the hub of this serrated cog-wheel (Chakra) as it slowly turns around it. So, the Atma begins to see these Gods one by one as they come into its line of vision, and begins to worship them one at a time as indicated by these Gods sitting on the top of the teeth of the serrated cog-wheel which is made to turn by Maya.] (60).

[Note—¹The innate nature and behaviour of a creature are determined by different *Vasanas or Vrittis*, or the worldly passions and inherent tendencies that it has. The Atma is unblemished and untainted by these notions, but is nevertheless blamed or accused of the consequences because it is the de-facto Lord or Master of creation and its faults. It cannot absolve itself of its responsibilities from these consequences. But this situation arises only when the creature thinks, though erroneously and fallaciously, that it is the 'doer' of any deed. This thought is provoked in it due to its ignorance about the immaculate nature of its pure self, which is the Atma. As soon as this wisdom sprouts in its bosom, the creature gets instant freedom from being affected by the different deluding notions simply because it treats itself as the uncorrupt and non-dual Atma, which is merely a witness and an observer of all that transpires around it in this world, instead of treating his body, which does the deeds, as his true self and getting unnecessarily involved in the deeds. The Atma is surrounded by a veil or shroud of ignorance which is like a plastic or glass transparent sheet, wrapping it from all the sides. No matter how clear and transparent that sheet might be, but it is not the same as the option of seeing and observing the truth and reality of the world direct without the intervening medium of the sheet representing ignorance and deception. So, any hint, any tinge of colour in this surrounding sheet of plastic or glass covering will make the Atma see the outside world with that particular tinge or shade of colour that appears in the surrounding sheet. Since it has no other way to determine the truth —other than removing the

surrounding plastic or glass sheet itself —the Atma begins to think that the tinged world really, indeed, has that colour; i.e. the tinge is for real. But, as we see, this colour is misleading and an incorrect interpretation of fact, because it is not actually the colour of the world but is due to the presence of a tinged intervening sheet of glass or plastic. This is what is meant in this verse. The creature ‘thinks’ that it is seeing or viewing or observing this world with the eyesight of wisdom and erudition, but it is being misled by this ‘tinged or corrupted’ biased mental vision of the actual truth and reality by the presence of ignorance and delusion caused by Agyan, or lack of truthful knowledge. In brief, what apparently appear to be the truth and the real fact is not so; it is a ‘tainted, corrupted, biased and untruthful’ perception and view of the real Reality and truthful Truth!

Vasanas are the different passions and worldly yearnings that are present as an inherent nature of an individual. The word here refers to the various passions, cravings, lust, attraction, infatuation, greed and yearnings that a man has for the materialistic world. It also means sexual pleasures, licentiousness. There are three types of Vasanas—(a) ‘Lok Vasana’—meaning a craving for the world, its objects, fame and material acquisition, (b) ‘Deha Vasana’—bodily pleasure and comfort as well as self gratification, and (c) ‘Shastra Vasana’—a desire to learn more and more of the scriptures and be called a learned, scholarly person, an expert, leading to fame, glory and wealth.

Other faults, shortcomings or impurities that impinge on the purity of the Atma are the worldly Raag and Dwesh (i.e. attachments and aversions, envy, jealousy and hatred, infatuations and loathing etc. Further classification of the faults associated with this world are the following—(a) Birth—to falsely believe that the Atma takes birth, (b) Problems of existence, (c) Contradiction, paradoxes, ironies, perplexities, vexations, confusion, dilemmas etc., problems of development, (e) Decay and degeneration, and (f) Destruction and annihilation.

²*Maya*—This concept is described as a note to verse no. 7, Canto no. 10 of the “Jabal Darshan Upanishad” of the Sam Veda which is under Section II of this book.]

61. Propelled by the force of Maya, this ‘serrated cog-wheel’¹ keeps on turning, and the creature keeps on wondering in it, hooked to it like a spider moving around in all the directions in the web of its own creation (61).

[Note—¹The concept of the wheel has been beautifully described in Shweta-shwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 4 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. The cog-wheel of Maya turns and with it the creature sees the ever changing colourful canvas of the deluding world. It remains trapped in this jigsaw.]

62. A ‘Jiva’ (i.e. a living being having an Atma or soul) moves because he literally rides on the back of the Pran. That is, it is the vital wind called Pran which infuses/injects life into an otherwise lifeless and inane entity called a creature or a Jiva. Consequentially, the latter begins to show signs of life and activity because it is enabled to do so by the Pran. Without the Pran it cannot move or show any sign of life and activity. The Kundalini is present at the base of the Kanda and has an exalted position in the body, though it is located at its lower end¹ [62].

[Note--¹This is because it is the Kundalini that traps the cosmic subtle energy that all aspirants of Yoga seek to ignite and harness for their spiritual welfare. The location of this Kundalini is very significant—it is like a furnace in the body, and a furnace is with the raging fire is best situated at the bottom of the pile so that it can burn the firewood properly and evenly. Even in an ordinary household cooking oven, the source of the flame is always directed at the center bottom of the cooking pot to optimally utilize the heat.]

63-64. This Kundalini is so called because it is a coil having three and a half (3 ½) loops in a spiral form. Under normal circumstances, it tends to block the circulation of air, water and food in the body. It spirals around the Kand (mentioned in verse no. 59-61) like a creeper surrounding a tree trunk. It surrounds and blocks the 'Brahm Randhra'¹ with its tip. [63-64]

[Note--¹This *Brahm-Randhra* is a hair-like joint or slit on the top of the skull. It is believed that the supreme Brahm had entered the creature's body at the time of creation through this slit. Great ascetics aspire to access Brahm by concentrating their attention here; at the time of death their Pran or the vital wind leaves the body through this opening.

According to Yoga philosophy, the Sushumna Naadi (a tubular duct in the body; nerve), which passes through the center of the spinal cord, goes straight up to it. This nerve is blocked at its base by the tip of the Kundalini. When the latter is activated, the block is removed, and the energy trapped in the body rises up this nerve to stimulate the brain, giving the aspirant a sense of spiritual accomplishment.]

65. With the practice of Yoga, this Kundalini becomes activated like a fire ignited and fanned by wind. [The 'wind' in this case is the different vital winds present inside the body.] Its flame sways majestically like an erect serpent's hood in the subtle space of the heart. It is illuminated and radiant like a burning fire [65].

66. The middle part of the human body is the place which is two fingers above the anus but in front of the urinary organs. In the case of 4-legged animals, the middle part is their heart region [66].

67. The central part of the body is called 'the navel region' located in the abdomen. It is here that various Naadis (the different tubular ducts/channels called the nerves and veins) present in the body form a cluster from where they radiate out to different parts of the body. [It acts like the hub for the Naadis.] The Naadi called 'Sushumna' has two types of subtle winds moving inside it—the Pran (the wind exhaled through the nostrils) and the Apan (the wind which is inhaled and passes down the intestines). This nerve has four sections [67].

[Note—The word *Naadi* is a common word used to denote both the veins as well as the nerves of the body—the former carry blood and nutrients to the various parts of the body, while the latter carry stimuli in the form of electric impulses from the distant parts of the body to the brain, and from the brain to all the parts of the body.]

68. The Sushumna Naadi is present in the center (core) of the Kand (mentioned in verse no. 58-59). It is like the filament of a lotus flower and it moves straight up in the upward direction [68].

69. This Naadi goes up to the 'Brahm Randhra'¹, and is therefore called the 'Vaishnavi Brahm Naadi'. It glows like electric and is especially enabled to provide Nirvan or emancipation and salvation to the spiritual aspirant/seeker [69].

[Note---¹The *Brahm Randhra* has two connotations—(1) the opening through which the Apaana wind enters the Kundalini to ignite it, and (2) the hair-like slit present on the top of the skull from it is believed that vital wind called Pran escapes out when an enlightened ascetics dies. It is also regarded as the joint through which the supreme Brahm entered the body at the time of creation.]

70-71. On either side of this Naadi (Sushumna) are present two other important Naadis known as Eda (or Ida) and Pingla. The Eda comes out from the Kand and goes up to the left nostril [70],---

---while the Pingla goes up to the right nostril. Gandhari and Hastijihwa are the two Naadis which are also present there [71].

72-73. Going behind the preceding Naadis, the Ghandhari goes up to the right eye, while the Pusa Naadi goes up to the left eye. The Payaswani Naadi goes to the right ear (literally 'the opposite side of the left ear'). The Hastijihwa and Yashaswini Naadis go to the big toes of the legs. The Alambusa Naadi goes downwards below the end of the genitals and enters the anus [72-73].

74. The Naadi called Kaushiki also heads down from the Kand towards the toes of the feet. These ten Naadis or nerves emerge from the Nabhi Kand (as described in verse no. 59-61) and radiate out from it [74].

75. Emerging simultaneously with these Naadis and branching out from them (like many tributaries of a river) are numerous finer ducts/channels which are no less important. There numbers are said to be roughly seventy two thousand [75].

[Note---The *Naadis* and their functions have also been described in other Upanishads such as Jabal Darshan, canto 4, verse no. 17-22 of Sam Veda tradition, and Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 4, verse nos. 1, 9-11 of the Atharva Veda tradition.]

76. It is very difficult to count and list all these fine nerves and veins. They are spread everywhere in the body just like veins and capillaries found in the leaf of a Fig tree [76].

77-78. Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana, Vyan, Nag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay—these are the ten vital winds which move in the Naadis (the veins and nerves) of the body. Out of these, the first five (Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana and Uyan) are more important, and even amongst them the first two (Pran and Apaana) are considered most important [77-78].

80. It is the Pran (the first wind) that bears life for the creature, i.e. it is the Pran which enables the creature to move and show other signs of life. Oh exalted sage! This Pran is said to have five subtle habitats or sites where it locates itself. These are---mouth, nostrils, heart, navel and the big toe of the feet. The Apaana wind has the following locations---anus, lower part of the abdomen, upper part of thighs and the knees. (See also verse no. 109-117 below.) [79-80].

81. The Samaana wind pervades in the whole body uniformly, the Udaana wind is present in the hands, legs and all the joints of the body [81].

82. The Vyaana wind stays in the ears, thighs, waist region, heels, shoulders and throat. The other five winds such as the Nag etc. are found in the skin, bones and other parts [82].

83. The Pran Vayu (wind) collects the food, water and digestive juices in the stomach and mixes them to form a paste. Thereafter, this paste is separated into different forms once again---the fiber part of the food forms the stool, the water content forms the urine, while the digestive juices form the important fluids of the body such as blood and semen etc. [83].

84. The Pran Vayu does all this independently or literally standing all by itself and seeking no help from any other wind. The Apaana Vayu helps in excretion of stool and urine from the body [84].

85. The efforts made by the Pran Vayu, the Apaana Vayu and others to accomplish their assigned tasks is aided and complimented by the Vyaana Vayu. The Udaana Vayu present in the body helps the latter to rise up or get up from a sitting or reclining position. (This 'rising' is a metaphor for spiritual enhancement also.)([85].

86. The nourishment and sustenance of the body is done by the Samaana Vayu because it helps in circulation of the blood. Passing of the wind upwards, such as during belching, is done by the Nag Vayu, while opening of the eyes is done by the Kurma Vayu [86].

87. The Krikan Vayu creates hunger, the Devdutta Vayu creates sleep etc., while the Dhananjay Vayu prevents the body from getting deformed immediately after death and delays decay of it for sometime [87].

[Note---See also verse no. 1/9 of this Upanishad as well as Jabal-darshan Upanishad, canto 4, verse no.23-34 of the Sam Veda in this context. Further, Subala-panishad, canto 9, verse no.1-14 gives another version and interpretation of these vital winds in the body.]

88. Oh exalted Brahmin! These Naadis (ducts in the body) and Prans (vital winds) have different functions. One must try to know and learn about them for his own benefit [88].

89-91. The Naadis should be cleansed as prescribed for this purpose. Thence the aspirant should diligently embark on the next phase of doing 'Asans' which are various sitting postures for meditation. For this he should sincerely renounce all attachments and snap all relations with the external world and retire to a lonely, serene and secluded place where there will be no disturbance or distractions of any kind (89).

He should collect all the necessary paraphernalia needed for doing Yoga without disturbance and distraction. These include making a seat of Kush grass (it is a dark green variety of grass called *Agrostis Linearis*) and covering it with dark hide of an antelope (90).

He should endeavour to have control over his body and try to strike a balance between its two sides (i.e. establish an equilibrium between the left and the right sides of the body). For this, he should adopt any of the various Asans, such as the Swastik Asan (as described in verse no. 35-52 above) until the time he is successful (91). [89-91].

92-94. To begin with, the aspirant should adopt any of the sitting postures or Asans that is convenient to him, and sit calmly erect on it.

[Now, the process of Pranayam is being described.] The sight should be fixed at the tip of the nose, the teeth of the upper jaw should not touch the teeth of the lower jaw (92), the tongue should be held up so as to touch the roof of the mouth, the mind should be free from all tensions, worries and fears, the head should be slightly bent forward in a meditative posture (93), the hands should be locked (clasping each other), and the exercise of Pranayam should be done. [That is, after sitting in the Yoga posture as described herein above, efforts should be made to control the breath by regulating exhalation and inhalation.]

The Pranayam process involves first exhaling the air/wind present in the body, and then inhaling fresh air/wind from the outside. The latter is kept inside the body for sometime before being allowed to be gradually let out (exhaled) (94). [92-94].

[Note—Pranayam has been described in great detail in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 40-41,63 and 89-112 of Sam Veda tradition.]

95-96. Pranayam constitutes of the following four steps---The right hand should be used to close the left nostril [95]---

---and the wind present in the body is allowed to be exhaled through the right nostril in a gradual manner. Then, fresh air should be pulled in through the Eda nerve, or the left nostril, in a time taken to say sixteen Matras (the syllables or the vowel sounds of the alphabets). This is called the 'Purak' or the filling phase of Pranayam (96).

97. The inhaled wind should be held inside the body, in a process known as 'Kumbhak' or a filling of a pot, for a time which is taken to say the Matras/syllables four times, or a total of $4 \times 16 = 64$ Matras/syllables. [That is, the time the wind is held in the stomach is four times the time taken to inhale it.]

After this, the wind should be exhaled slowly through the right nostril in a time that is twice that was taken to inhale it, or half of that time taken when the wind was held inside the body. That is, the exhalation time should be equivalent to the time taken to say thirty two Matras/syllables ($2 \times 16 = 32$) [97].

[Note—The sixteen 'Maatras' or vowel sounds in Sanskrit correspond roughly to the following English sounds—A (as in "a pen"), Aa, E, Ee, U or Oo, Uu or Ooo, Ri, Rii, Ae, Aye, O, Ou, Ang, Aha, Lri, and Lrii.]

98. This process should be repeated by alternatively changing the nostrils used for inhalation and exhalation¹. Each time, the inhaled breath should be held inside the body for the prescribed period before letting it out [98].

[Note---¹The wind should be taken in first by one nostril, say the left, and exhaled by the right, then taken in by the right nostril and exhaled by the left. This process is to be repeated, each time reversing the previous order. Once inhaled, the wind should be retained in the body for a period as described in verse no. 95-97 above.]

99. Oh Brahmin! With this practice, all the Naadis become free (unclogged) for the vital winds to move freely in them. All the ten winds (see verse no. 77-78) which are present in the body of the creature and lend life to it, begin to flow freely and unhindered in the Naadis; they spread uniformly through them [99].

100. Consequentially, the subtle and divine 'lotus' present in the body and represented symbolically by the heart, comes to develop and bloom in all its pristine beauty and glory. One begins to witness or visualise the supreme Soul called 'Parmatma', who is also known as Vasudeo (the Lord of Vasus; Lord Vishnu), in that divine lotus-like heart [100].

[Note—See verse no.142-160 of this canto in this context. Vishnu is called 'Vasudeo' because he is the Lord of all the eight patron Gods who preside over the essential elements that came into being at the time of creation to sustain the creation created by Brahm, the ultimate Lord. Thus, Vishnu is the regent king who looks after the realm on behalf of the Emperor Brahm. The eight *Vasus* are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are—(i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun-God (who provides energy and food), (iii) Shiva (the concluder or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water-God (called Varun), (vi) the Fire-God (called Agni), (vii) the rays and radiance of the sun (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), and (viii) the holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation). The element 'Fire' is the most potent, prominent and essential force in creation, because without fire the world would freeze to death. Hence, the Fire-God is said to be the chief amongst the Vasus. According to Brihad-Aranakya Upanishad 3/9/3, the Vasus are the following—Fire, Earth, Air, Antariksha (the space of the solar system), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heavens), the Moon and the Nakshatras (the stars and the planets).]

101. This practice of Kumbhak (i.e. holding of breath by Pranayam) should be done four times a day—at morning (dawn), at noon, at evening (dusk) and at midnight. The duration of Kumbhak should be gradually increased from 64 Matras (see verse no. 97) to 80 Matras (i.e. by another 1/4th period of time). So if initially the Kumbhak was done for, say, 64 seconds, it should be increased to 80 seconds [101].

102-103. It (Kumbhak and Pranayam) is so effective and potent that mere one day's practice can help the aspirant to get rid of or destroy the bad effects of all his sins (102).

Such a Yogi (ascetic who practices meditation in the manner prescribed herein above) is said to have successfully accomplished expertise in doing Yoga perfectly. In

other words, he has accomplished the aim of doing Pranayam successfully. Such an accomplished Yogi is therefore known as 'Yog-Siddha'. Such an aspirant is deemed to be one who has vanquished or successfully controlled the vital wind forces, is successful in exercising self restraint over his sense organs, has conquered (controlled) his appetite and hunger and longing for tasty food, has also been able to overcome sleep (i.e. he is alert and vigilant; he is not indolent and lethargic). As a consequence, he shines with a divine glow and radiance which effuses from his body and surrounds him like a glorious halo. He is strong, robust and powerful (because he has acquired mystical divine powers and authority) (103). [102-103].

104-105. He overcomes fear from premature death, and therefore has a long life. The Pranayam that produces sweat/perspiration is of the lowest type; that which makes the body shiver or tremble or shake is of medium quality; while that in which the body starts levitating upwards is said to be of the best quality [104-105].

[Note—Refer Yog-chudamani Upanishad, verse no. 105 of Sam Veda tradition.]

106-107. The lowest type Pranayam is also potent enough to eliminate or destroy all ordinary diseases and sins. The medium type is capable of eliminating great diseases or serious illnesses and more serious sins and their consequences. The best type of Pranayam makes the seeker sleep less (i.e. keeps him alert and vigilant), reduces (regulates) his urine and stool outputs (i.e. his alimentary canal and urinary organs function properly, as excess stool and urine are signs of some disease of those organs), and enables him to be contented by eating less. This results in his having a trim and healthy body. His intellect becomes sharp and focused; his sense organs function effectively and optimally. He is bestowed with mystical powers to have a sixth sense which enables him to know the past, the present and the future [106-107].

108. An aspirant Yogi (ascetic) who can successfully avoid the need for exhaling and inhaling breath, that is, who can hold breath for prolonged periods of time, becomes so potent that nothing remains impossible for him to do or accomplish in all the three periods--- the past, the present and the future [108].

[Note—This verse refers to the ability of the aspirant to withhold breath inside his body for an extended period of time during the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam, without feeling any discomfort and the need to either exhale it, called the Rechak phase, and then inhale fresh air in the Purak phase of Pranayam. This is possible in later stages of Yoga when a person has become expert in this exercise.]

109. An aspirant Yogi who is committed and diligent in doing Yoga as prescribed and elucidated in Upanishads dealing with this subject, should endeavour to establish (concentrate) the elementary force of life called 'Pran' in his Nabhi Kand, the tip of his nose and the tip of the big toes of the legs¹ during the regular practice of Sandhya² [109].

[Note—¹The *Nabhi Kand* has been described in verse no. 58-59. This process of fixing the attention on the tip of the nose or the big toe or the navel are part of meditative practice which help in concentration of the mind and its various faculties along with harnessing of the subtle energy present in the body of the Yogi.

²*Sandhya* is a religious sacrament done three times a day---dawn, noon and dusk—when prayers are offered to the supreme Lord. These points of time stand for the tri-junction of the two eyebrows and the root of the nose where the Avimukta area is supposed to be symbolically located in the body—the dawn is the meeting point of the night and the day, the noon of the pre-noon hours and post-noon part of the day, and dusk for the day and the night. See Jabal Upanishad, section 2, verse no. 2.]

110. By following this procedure, the aspirant is able to become disease free and happily live a long life. By concentrating the vital wind in the region of the Nabhi Kand (i.e. the navel region), all ailments pertaining to the abdomen are cured or eliminated for good [110].

111-112. If the vital wind called Pran is held at the tip of the nose, one has a long life and the body becomes light (see verse no. 107-108 also). If the fresh air is literally ‘drunk’ by an extended tongue during the early morning hours before dawn, called the ‘Brahm Murhut’ period, for a continuous period of three months, the aspirant acquires mystical powers called ‘Vaak-Siddhi’ in which whatever he says becomes true. Further, if the exercise is continued uninterrupted for six months, then he is freed or liberated from great diseases. (See also verse no.106) [111-112].

[Note—The *Brahm Murhut* is a period of roughly 48 minutes before the sun rises. This period is very useful and good for health because the air is rich in oxygen and is pollution free. The tongue is moist and its surface dissolves this oxygen in its mucous linings. This helps in oxidizing the blood directly, and the fresh air helps to ventilate the entire system when meditation is done during this period before dawn.]

113. If the various parts of the body suffer due to different diseases such as stiffness etc. caused by various impediments in free flow of the vital winds inside the body, then such ailments can be overcome by concentrating the pure Pran Vayu (breath; the life sustaining vital winds) on those parts. [In practical terms it would mean reactivating sluggish tissues and de-clogging of the various nerves and veins, the blocking of which has created such symptoms which have been called the various diseases afflicting the body.] [113].

114. The inclinations of the mind create similar tendencies in the winds or the Prans¹. Hence, oh exalted Brahmin, it is imperative to control and stabilise the winds in order to control and stabilise the mind [114].

[Note---¹If the mind is restless and suppose it yearns to go to a particular place, then the wind force called Udaan, which enables a person to get up and move, becomes active and the man walks to that place. If the mind wishes to eat something, the wind force called Krikar becomes active and it creates pangs of hunger. And so on and so forth. Therefore, when the mind becomes calmed down, the winds that control the various functions also calm down proportionally as a consequence. Therefore, the reverse is also true—i.e. to control the mind, the winds have to be controlled. Verse no. 83-88 describes the functions of the various vital winds.]

115-116. The Apaana Vayu (wind) should be moved away from the organs of action (where it is generally localised and active; see verse no. 80) and moved upwards (via the Kundalini). In order to control the mind, the openings of the ears (along with the eyes, nose and mouth) should be closed with the help of the fingers of the hands [115-116].

[Note—Its effectiveness is very obvious. When the four out of the five sensory organs of perception—ears, nose, eyes and mouth—are closed, the aspirant's mind will be free from being overwhelmed with disturbance creating impulses coming through these organs—such as the impulses of sound, smell, sight and taste respectively. For all practical purposes, it will amount to 'shutting the doors of the body to interference by unwelcome intruders'. With no unwanted guests to disturb the inner peace, the mind becomes tranquil and calm.]

117. When one is able to obtain victory over the restlessness of his mind and is able to calm it down, the Pran Vayu becomes regular and stable. Its natural passage through the nostrils is restored (i.e. a person begins to breathe normally and rhythmically through both his nostrils without them becoming clogged. See also verse no. 77-88 in this context.)

118-119. There are three principal Naadis (ducts or channels) in the body. [These are Sushmna, Eda and Pingla nerves.] Those who do Pranayam regularly and properly in the prescribed manner witness the flow of breath uninterruptedly and uniformly through the two nostrils for a prolonged period of time, and in a sustained manner as if the wind was being blown through the hole of the conch shell held in the right hand¹. Such a person is able to conquer or exercise control over his Pran or the vital wind forces that sustain life in the body of the creature [118-119].

[Note—¹This is a significant observation because the conch shell is blown at the beginning, at every pause and at the end of a religious ritual. By citing it as an example, the sage wishes to emphasise that the flow of vital winds through the nostrils should be unhindered like the passing of the wind through the conch shell. Aside of this, when the wind blows constantly in this manner, it produces vibrations in the brain that resemble the cosmic Naad that pervades throughout the universe. This sound is like the blowing of the conch shell, and therefore the citation of the latter is most apt here. These vibrations softly massage the nerves of the brain, providing a sense of great relaxation and ease to the practitioner of Yoga. This translates into peace, bliss and tranquility.]

120. Such an accomplished ascetic becomes empowered with great mystical powers to know about what is happening in the day, in the night, in the dark and the bright phases of the lunar month, in the different seasons, the path on which the world moves etc. by the stupendous powers of insight and far sight that develops within him. He has these powers built quite effortlessly in his wisdom and intellect [120].

121. When the thumb and the big toes (as well as the fingers of the hands and the other toes of the legs) start becoming numb, one should realise that his end (death) is near at hand (imminent) [121].

122-124. When a wise aspirant Yogi becomes aware of such bad signs which indicate undesired and unfortunate consequences for him (i.e. omens which are indicative of imminent death), he should focus his attention exclusively on the ways to attain the only and ultimate end called 'Kaivalya', which refer to the merger of his microcosmic individual Pran (i.e. the vital winds present in his body) with the macrocosmic universal Pran (the all-pervading air or wind element of creation). [In other words, he should prepare himself to face the truth and whole-heartedly pursue the objective of emancipation and salvation of his Atma or soul. Refer also verse no. 148-150 of this canto.]

When the thumbs of the hands and the big toes of the legs become inactive or become lethargic and indolent and begin to disobey him, then he should be ware that his life will come to an end within a year (a Samwatsar). If the wrists and the knees become inactive, then he would live for not more than six months.

If the activities of the elbows and palms stop, then the end (death) is only three months away. [122-124].

[Note—The concept of *Kaivalya* has been elaborately explained in a special Upanishad of this name belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

125. If there is no activity or sensation in the waist and abdomen region as well as urinary and genital organs, then life comes to an end within a month [125].

126. When there is no activity or sensation in the rectum and anus, the term of life remains not more then ten days. When the eyesight becomes so weak that the Sun and the Moon appear to be no more than glow worms, then only five days (literally, half of ten) are left to survive [126].

127. When one is unable to see further than one's protruded tongue, then only three days are left of his life, while when one cannot see the light of fire, then the death is only two days away [127].

128. All these signs are indicative of the fact that the duration of life is coming to an end. With their onset, one should endeavour to provide for one's spiritual welfare by diligently and faithfully getting himself involved in doing 'Japa' (constant and persistent repetition of divine Mantras or the holy name of the Lord) besides focusing the attention on Dhyan or doing contemplation and meditation [128].

129. The supreme transcendental cosmic Soul called Parmatma or the Lord God should be constantly, persistently, honestly and diligently focused upon, contemplated upon and meditated upon to the exclusion of everything else. The dying man should endeavour to become one with the supreme Soul. That is, he should withdraw his mind from the delusions and distractions created by the artificial and entrapping world of sensual gratification and material comfort and pleasures, and instead concentrate it on the Atma, the 'pure self' which is pure consciousness. This supreme and conscious factor should be symbolically established in the eighteen important and sensitive points in the body [129].

130-133. To withdraw or pull away from one place and relocate and get established at another place is called 'Pratyahar'. (See also verse no. 30.)

[Now the sage enumerates those points in the body which are important as stated in verse no. 129.] The big toe of the feet, the heels, the middle of thighs [130],---

---the middle of groins (testicles), the anus and the rectum, the heart, the urinary organs, the middle of the body where the navel is located, the throat, the elbow [131],

---the gullet, the root of nose, the eyes, the junction point of the two eyebrows, the forehead, the root of the head (nape of neck), the knee caps [132],

---the roots of the hands (i.e. the shoulder, elbow and wrist joints)—oh Brahmin, all these are said to be the important points in a body made of five basic elements called the 'Panch Bhuts' (which are earth, fire, water, air and space) [133]

[Note—In this context, refer Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 7, verse no. 52.]

134. 'Dharna' is defined as inculcating a firm faith, unwavering conviction and honest belief in some concept as a result of contemplation and deep pondering on that concept by focusing the mind, intellect and attention through the medium of various 'Yams' which broadly mean self restraint of passions and desires, observing penances and cessation of worldly activities which cause distraction and restlessness. [*Dharna* and *Yam* have also been described previously in verse no. 31 and 32-33 respectively of this canto.] With the help of this symbolic boat, a wise person becomes able to cross this world-like ocean with ease [134].

135. The 'earth element' is said to be present in the body from the sole of the feet up to the knees. The earth is visualised as having four corners, a yellow colour, and is endowed with a hardness which is equivalent to that of Vajra, the hardest material in existence (and therefore was used by Indra, the king of Gods, to make his weapon from). [135].

136. The wind should be restrained as described above (in verse no. 92-112 dealing with Pranayam) for a period of approximately two hours or 'Panch-Ghati' (which is 5 x 24 minutes = 120 minutes) while focusing or concentrating the attention on the earth element mentioned earlier (in verse no. 135). The 'water element' is present in the body from the knee joint to the waist area (the lower abdomen) [136].

137. The 'water element' is visualised in the shape of a crescent moon, is coloured white and resembles the simmering silver. The aspirant should hold his breath (i.e. do Pranayam) for four hours or ten Ghatis (10 x 24 = 240 minutes, or 4 hours), all the while meditating upon the water element [137].

138-141. The 'fire element' is said to be present in the middle part of the body around the navel and lower abdomen region. It has the contours of leaping and swaying flame, and is red hot like vermilion. The aspirant should fix his attention on the fire element while holding the breath for six hours or fifteen Ghatis (i.e. 15 x 24 minutes = 360 minutes = 6 hours).

The 'wind element' is present from the navel region up to the nostrils. It is shaped like an altar or a dais, its colour resembles that of smoke or haze. This potentially powerful wind element should be meditated upon by holding breath inside (i.e. the Kumbhak phase—see verse no. 98) [138-140] for a period of eight hours or twenty Ghatis (i.e. 20 x 24 = 480 minutes = 8 hours).

The part of the body from the nostrils up to the top of the head at the spot called 'Brahm Randhra' (literally the hair-like slit or the miniscule hole through which Brahm entered the body at the time of creation and through which an accomplished ascetic's Pran is supposed to exit at the time of his death –) is the area where the 'sky element' predominates. It has the shade of azure /light blue [141]

142-144. A sincere and diligent aspirant should endeavour to concentrate and hold the vital wind force called Pran (i.e. do Kumbhak) in the subtle 'sky' region of the head. In the 'earth' element he should contemplate that the supreme Lord with four arms and adorned with a crown and tiara on his head [142],---

---whose divine name is Hari Aniruddha, is present. In this way, the Yogi (aspirant ascetic) is able to, or acquires the competence to, or becomes eligible to attain liberation and deliverance from this entrapping, deluding and mundane world. Lord Narayan should be visualised as being subtly present in the region of the body having a predominance of the water element [143],---

---Pradumna (a name of Lord Vishnu) in the region of the fire element, Sankarshan (another name Vishnu) in the region of the wind element, and the supreme Lord called Parmatma Vasudeo in the sky region respectively [144]

145. The aspirant Yogi who diligently pursues this practice on a constant and persistent basis, is able to witness or have a first hand experience of the supreme Lord very soon; there is no doubt about it.

[Now the process or steps to be adopted to contemplate upon the supreme Lord Vasudeo, also called Narayan Hari or Vishnu, is being described here--] To start with, the aspirant should sit in any one of the sitting postures or Asans (described in verse no. 2/35-52 above) and focus his attention and concentrate his mind on his heart and imagine or think of the special features of it (such as it being lotus shaped, or having a subtle form of a divine swan, or a whirling subtle energy center called the Heart Chakra, or as one of the legendary abodes of Atma or Brahm) [145].

146. The sight should be fixed on the tip of the nose. The tongue should touch the roof the mouth, the two rows of teeth should not touch each other, the body should be held erect, and the aspirant should sit still/motionless [146].

147. He should employ his pure (uncorrupt and unbiased) intellect and wisdom to exercise control over all his sense organs. He should deeply ponder, meditate and contemplate upon Vasudeo (Vishnu) who is the supreme, transcendental Soul or Lord God of the creation [147].

148-150. An aspirant is able to obtain the highest stature that is possible to attain, a state known as 'Kaivalya', by constantly and diligently contemplating and meditating upon that supreme entity which uniformly pervades his whole being, and especially his heart where the Atma resides. Thus, an aspirant who contemplates and meditates upon Lord Vasudeo by controlling all his sense organs [148] is able to destroy or eliminate the sins that he has been accumulating for his previous seven lives.

The 'waking state of consciousness' is said to be when the consciousness is dominant in the region between the navel and the heart; the 'dream state of

consciousness' is said to be when the consciousness is dominant in the region of the throat; the 'deep sleep state of consciousness' is said to be when the consciousness is dominant in the middle of the palate of the mouth; and the last state called 'Turiya state of consciousness' is when the consciousness is dominant in the forehead between the eyebrows [149-150].

[Note—The word Kaivalya refers to that unique state which is one of its kind and hence the name. Here, the ascetic's Atma dissolves with the cosmic Atma like the case when a mud pot is broken and the space within it merges with the vast space present outside, leaving no distinction between the two. In other words, when the wise and enlightened aspirant dies, his vital wind called Pran seamlessly coalesces with the infinite wind element present outside his body. Refer also verse no. 122-124 of this canto.]

151-153. The state which transcends the Turiya state (which is the 4th state of consciousness) is symbolically located in the Brahm Randhra region of the head (the top of the skull). In this state, the ascetic remains face to face with (i.e. focused on) the supreme Brahm. Starting from the 'waking state of consciousness', called Jagrat, and extending up to the Turiya state where one witnesses Brahm, Lord Vishnu is the presiding deity.

[All the names of the Lord mentioned in verse nos. 142-144, such as Aniruddha, Narayan, Hari, Pradumna, Sankarshan and Vasudeo are all the different names of the same supreme Lord Vishnu---] This Lord Vishnu is another sublime form or divine manifestation of the supreme essence and the prime consciousness of creation called the Atma.

The spiritual aspirant should contemplate upon the clear 'sky' element (located at the top of the head—see verse no. 141) which is illuminated by a splendorous source of divine light which is equivalent to millions of suns in its brightness. [This 'light' is symbolic of the presence of Brahm there.] The aspirant should also contemplate upon his lotus-like heart which is the seat of that eternally self-illuminated Supreme Being personified in the image of Lord Vishnu.

[It has already been said above that Vishnu is a manifestation of the cosmic Atma. Since the heart is the abode of the Atma, it follows that it is also the seat of Vishnu. There is another spin off to this observation—Vishnu is responsible for sustenance of creation, and love, compassion, mercy, graciousness, kindness and magnanimity which are the special qualities of the heart are needed for such a great enterprise as sustenance of such a vastly diverse creation. Thus, Vishnu's abode (heart) reflects these virtues in abundance.] [151-153].

154-158. Having numerous and variable forms, shapes and manifestations, having countless arms bearing countless weapons [154],---

---having different hues of complexions and visages representing different sections and aspects of creation, being a collective image of all the Gods at once, being calm, tranquil and serene, being potent, powerful, active and agile in every respect, being apparently angry and violent at times, holding numerous weapons, having countless eyes, having the splendour and radiance of millions of suns [155],---

---and being an image of the entire universe in the manifestation of the Viraat Purush (who represents the sum total of all the gross bodies of this creation; the

macrocosmic form of Brahm)—if an ascetic contemplates and meditates upon such a stupendously magnificent and glorious form of Lord Vishnu, then all the various Vrittis of his heart (i.e. the different tendencies and inclinations of his heart which are inherent to him and form an integral part of his personality) are totally eliminated.

Present in the center of the lotus-like heart, this supreme and indescribable divine entity is pure consciousness; it is an embodiment of divine light (of enlightenment), is imperishable, eternal and infinite [156],---

---and has a rounded and broad base like that of the tree called Kadamb (*neculea cadamba*)—a metaphor for being uniform from all sides, having a wide, all-encompassing and diffused presence, and being holy like this tree. This divine entity exists in the Turiya state of consciousness (which is the 4th and the most exalted state of existence for a creature), is supreme and transcendental, is without an end, is blissful and enlightened, is self illuminated and radiant, is Vibhu (i.e. is sinless, pure, omnipresent, all pervading, eternal, almighty and majestic) [157],---

---is steady like a the flame of a lighted lamp burning in a windless and quiet environ, and is endowed with an inherent natural glowing radiance and bright illumination that characterizes a precious gem or precious stone. By contemplating and meditating upon this supreme entity (Atma) that possesses these virtues, a wise and enlightened Yogi (ascetic) can have easy access to 'Mukti' (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) as if it was there right in his own hands [158].

159-160. Whatever form of the supreme Lord that exists, whether as the vast composite and all-inclusive image of the cosmos in the body of the Viraat Purush as well as the different individual Gods at the macrocosmic level of creation, or as the gross, the subtle and the causal bodies of the individual creatures in creation at the microcosmic level—if a wise ascetic enshrines all these divine images or forms of the supreme Lord who personifies the whole creation and incorporates it in its entirety in his divine form, loving the creation and giving it place in his own lotus-like heart [159],---

---and then the ascetic contemplates and meditates upon the Lord in this all-encompassing and ubiquitous form, then such an ascetic becomes one like the Lord himself. He is able to acquire the various Siddhis¹ (special mystical powers) such as Anima etc. [160].

[Note—¹The *Siddhis* mentioned in this verse refer to certain mystical powers. They are 8 in number—(1) Anima the power to become so small that one cannot be seen; (2) Mahima to have influence, glory, importance, majesty, good name and fame; (3) Garima to have dignity, stature, gravity, weight, significance and importance; (4) Laghima to have the virtues of humility and simplicity; (5) Prapti the power to acquire anything desired or wished; (6) Prakramya to possess valour, strength, prowess, potentials and powers; (7) Ishatwa to have lordship, to be a master of the realm and the subordinates; and (8) Vashitwa the ability to control others; to cast a spell on others; authority; to subdue others. See also verse no. 100 of this canto in this context.]

161-162. [Samadhi is being described here-] After having acquired the knowledge of the essential nature and truth behind what is known as 'Jivatma' (literally the individual soul or Atma of the living creature) and its counterpart, the supreme transcendental Being

called Purush, the aspirant realises the truth of the statement 'I am that supreme Brahm'(161).

This is called the state of Samadhi. All inclinations and tendencies of the mind and heart pertaining to this world automatically come to an end with this realisation. Any Yogi (ascetic) who attains or realises the quintessential truth about the supreme transcendental Brahm does not have to come back or take another birth again in this temporal, mortal and perishable world (162). [161-162].

163. In the above manner, a diligent and wise Yogi sincerely searches, researches and implements the various eclectic tenets, the doctrines, the irrefutable axioms and maxims of Yoga. Consequentially, he purges his mind of all worldly attachments, allurements, desires, passions, tendencies and inclinations which ultimately result in his becoming calm and literally 'extinguished like a previously raging fire'¹. [163].

[Note—¹That is, even as a fiercely burning fire dies down when its fuel is exhausted, all the agitations and restlessness of the mind of such an aspirant die down and he becomes calm and steady, peaceful and blissful. This state is equivalent to a Samadhi which is a trance like state of bliss when the aspirant loses all worldly awareness and remains engrossed in constant communion with the supreme Brahm. He becomes steady and calm. Nothing ruffles him anymore. The analogy of the fire is most apt here because even as the fire can destroy everything around it, the fire of worldly passions and desires can completely destroy a man's inherent divinity and purity, shatter his composure and play havoc with his natural blissful nature.]

164. For such an exalted and enlightened Yogi, there remains nothing which he would like to seek or aspire for, because everything is available to him already. His mind and intellect have been enlightened about the paramount truth pertaining to the Pran as well as the Atma. As a result, his Atma and Pran both dissolve or merge or coalesce with the pure, divine, supreme and transcendental element in creation, known as Brahm, even as a lump of salt dissolves in water without leaving any trace behind [164].

[Note—Here, the individual Atma and Pran are treated as the individual lump of salt, while the cosmic Truth in which they merge upon self-realisation is likened to Brahm.]

165-166. To such an exalted Yogi, this world appears to be like a dream of an entrapping net made of 'Maya', i.e. the net cast by delusions and false attractions of a world which is itself false and mirage like). As a consequence, he goes beyond this dream and remains in a calm and tranquil state as if he were perpetually in a deep sleep state of existence called 'Sushupta' (165).

Such a Yogi rides on a path of ultimate emancipation and salvation which is called attaining the state of 'Kaivalya' (or the only state which gives him eternal peace and perpetual bliss by merging his own Atma with the supreme Atma of the creation known as the Brahm. This helps him to get rid of the endless cycle of birth and death.) Verily, this is what this Upanishad proclaims; this is what it asserts (166). Amen! [165-166].

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(III—C) Mandal Brahmin Upanishad

This Upanishad is a dialogue between sage Yagyavalkya and the Sun God. It has five cantos called 'Brahmins' because this Upanishad primarily deals with the knowledge that pertains to the conscious Atma, and which ultimately leads to Brahm realisation. Each Brahman has a number of sections. The greatest value of this Upanishad lies in the fact that it was revealed by the Sun God, called the 'Mandal Purush', to sage Yagyavalkya, one of the most prominent and erudite exponent of the Advaitya philosophy of Brahm.

The word 'Mandal' refers to a vast territorial area or division, while 'Brahman' is a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent divine Being called Brahm. Since the questioner here is sage Yagyavalkya, one of the greatest exponents of Brahm's knowledge, and the teacher is the Sun God, the visible manifestation of the supreme Brahm, who resides in the vast and endless sky, or Mandal, symbolically representing the infinite virtues of the supreme Brahm, and who is a Brahmin himself because not only does he teach about Brahm but is obviously wiser than Yagyavalkya, for a man always approaches a person wiser than himself whenever he seeks more knowledge, this Upanishad is cleverly named as *Mandal Brahman* to incorporate both the connotations.

The five cantos or Brahmans indicate that Yagyavalkya had approached the teacher, the Sun God on five different occasions, and on each occasion the teacher had one or more sittings to elucidate the great knowledge, each sitting becoming a section or sub-canto. That is why, some Brahmans (cantos) have more than one sections, while some have only one section.

Brahman 1 basically describes elaborately the concepts of the eight-fold path of Yoga, including such terms as Yam and Niyam, the Asans and Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna and Samadhi, as well as other metaphysical concepts as the various faults, the different forms of skies, their significance, the states of the mind and how they affect the behaviour of the creature, how the mind can be controlled, etc. This Brahman has four sections.

Brahman 2 describes the Atma which is radiant with self-illumination, and it goes on to describe the benefits of being acquainted with the truthful form of the Atma. Then the two Mudras (postures, specially of the hands, face, legs and other parts of the body) of Yoga (meditation exercises) are described in detail—such as the Shambhi and Khechari Mudras, along with their benefits and signs of accomplishing success in them. Other topics covered are how to hear the cosmic Naad or the ethereal background sound prevalent in the entire universe, what is the dispassionate state of the mind, the various states or planes in which the consciousness exists, how to obtain liberation and deliverance from this entrapping, deluding and materialistic world with the aid of Yoga along with the control of the mind. This Brahman has five sections.

Brahman 3 defines the so-called 'Amanask' state of the mind, i.e. the state when the mind ceases to have any relevance, and it becomes peaceful, tranquil and serene, leading to the Kaivalya (i.e. the only one and the supreme) state of existence of the pure consciousness. It has two sections.

Brahman 4 elaborates upon the concept of 'Panch Vyom', or the five subtle skies described in metaphysics. It has only one section.

Brahman 5 describes what ‘bondage’ is and what ‘liberation’ is. It elucidates on the results of Samadhi (the trance-like state obtained at the successful culmination of Yoga) as well as the concept called ‘Param Tattwa’, i.e. the supreme transcendental essence or the elementary principal behind whatever that exists, visible and non-visible. This Tattwa is the irrefutable and immutable Truth in creation, while all the rest is falsehood. This Brahman also has only one section.

So we see that this Upanishad covers a wide array of metaphysical and spiritual topics related to self-realisation and the search for the truth. It explains the various terms briefly and succinctly. Since sage Yagyavalkya was deemed to be erudite and wise himself, his teacher in this Upanishad, i.e. the Sun God, was very brief in his expositions, but the answers that he gave address the essential spirit of the questions asked by the sage. The very first verses of each Brahman outline the topics that are to be covered in that particular canto. Since there are five Brahmans, there are five basic questions or topics as follows—(1) Brahman 1—What is the essential knowledge pertaining to the Atma, called the ‘Atma Tattwa’, and how to realise it? (2) Brahman 2—What is ‘looking inside and deep meditation’, how to do it, which is the object of this contemplation, what are the various states of consciousness, and how does realisation lead to liberation and deliverance of the seeker? (3) Brahman 3—What is the non-involved, indifferent and dispassionate state of the mind, and how is it achieved, and what are its benefits? (4) Brahman 4—What are the five metaphysical skies, and what are their importance and significance? (5) Brahman 5—How is final liberation obtained by Samadhi?

This Upanishad has great resemblance to Advai Tarak Upanishad. Both complement each other, both in the scope and tenor of the subject matter.

We would observe that the various topics overlap each other, and it cannot be said that a particular Brahman is exclusively devoted to it—viz. the concept of Samadhi is dealt with in Brahman 1, section 1, verse no. 9-10, and then in Brahman 2, section 3, verse no. 4-5, and then again in section 3, verse no. 3-5, as well as in Brahman 5, verse no. 8-9.

Similarly, the renunciate state of the mind called ‘Amanasak’ is dealt with in Brahman 1, section 3, verse no. 4; in Brahman 2, section 2, verse no. 4; in the entire Brahman 3; and Brahman 5, verse no. 8. Likewise, the concept of ‘Akash’ or the subtle sky is elucidated in Brahman 1, section 2, verse no. 13, and the entire Brahman 4. The various Yoga postures are described in Brahman 2, section 1, verse no. 5, 8 as well as in Brahman 3, section 1, verse no. 2.

The great sayings or the universal truths enshrined in the tenets of the Vedas, called the ‘Mahavakyas’, are mentioned in this Upanishad as follows—(a) ‘That is me’, or ‘that is I’ is mentioned in Brahman 2, section 2, verse no. 5; (b) ‘I am Tej or I am energy personified’, ‘I am Pragya or personified knowledge’, ‘I am one and immutable’, ‘I am pure and non-dual Brahm’—these are mentioned in Brahman 2, section 4, verse no. 4; (c) ‘I am the eternal and immaculate Parmatma’, ‘I am that essence’, ‘you are me’, ‘I am you’ are mentioned in Brahman 3, section 1, verse no. 6; (d) ‘I am Brahm’ appears in Brahman 3, section 2, verse no. 1; and finally (e) ‘You are me’ appears in Brahman 3, section 2, verse no. 2.

This Upanishad was revealed by the Sun God, the most exalted God—and the most splendid one at that—amongst the pantheon of Gods.

Brahman 1, Section 1

[This Brahman is dedicated to the various concepts of Yoga. Reference should be made to Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, and Advai Tarak Upanishad. Other chief Upanishads which deal with Yoga are Yogchudamani and Jabal Darshan of Sam Veda tradition as well as Shandilya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda.]

1. Once the great sage Yagyavalkya went to the abode of Aditya (the Sun God), bowed before him reverentially and said, 'Oh Lord Aditya! Please preach me about 'Atma Tattwa', or the principle knowledge which pertains to the basic truth, the essential form and nature of the conscious soul called Atma' (1).

2. Then Narayan (here referring to the Sun God as a personification of the Viraat Purush or Vishnu also known by the name of Narayan) replied, 'Along with the fundamental knowledge pertaining to the Atma, I shall enlighten you about the various Yams and Niyams etc. which are collectively called 'Yoga' having eight limbs or parts (2).

[Note—(1) The word *Yam* means self control. (2) The word *Niyam* refers to the various tenets, regulations, norms, laws and rules that are to be strictly followed for success in any spiritual endeavour. (3) The *eight-fold path of Yoga* mentioned above are the following-- According to Patanjali who is considered to be the greatest exponent of Yoga, the latter consists of 8-fold path. These are briefly the following—(1) 'Yam' or self restraint; (2) 'Niyam' or observance of certain sacrosanct rules; (3) 'Aasan' or postures for meditation; (4) 'Pranyam' or breath control exercises for purification of the body and mind; (5) 'Pratyahar' or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (6) 'Dhaarna' or having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; (7) 'Dhyan' or contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect; and (8) 'Samadhi' or a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation.]

3. [This verse describes the various Yams.]

To overcome the notion of feeling (excessive) heat and cold (and getting agitated about them), to have control over the urge to eat and sleep (more than necessary), to remain ever calm and tranquil (even during the greatest of adversities), to remain unwavering, unaffected and steady (like a mountain and the flame of a lamp protected from the wind), and to be able to exercise control over the sense organs (of perception and action)—these are categorised as the various 'Yams' (3).

4. [This verse describes the various Niyams.]

Devotion towards one's moral preceptor, teacher and guide called a Guru, dedication and diligent pursuit of the path which is righteous, auspicious and noble, having contentedness with whatever is available, taking up residence in a secluded and serene place that gives peace, solitude, tranquility and calmness, having non-attachment with and indifference towards anything and anyone in this world, ensuring diversion of the mind away from the sensual pleasures and charming objects of the materialistic world

(i.e. having no hedonistic tendencies), having no expectation of any reward from any deed done or action taken, and having a sense of exemplary renunciation—all these are the various ‘Niyams’ to be followed by the seekers of true knowledge of the Atma (4).

5. [This verse describes the various Asans or the sitting postures during meditation.]

To sit in a posture that is comfortable for a long time without making the aspirant restless is called ‘Sukhaasan’. To remain in a single posture without making any especial efforts to do so, i.e. without even being aware that one is sitting in that posture, is called ‘Chirniwas’. [That is, any sitting posture that enables the aspirant to sit comfortably for a long period of time at a stretch is preferred to a formal posture that, though advised by experts, gives restlessness and makes one fidgety because such postures would not be conducive to concentration of the mind due to the pain and discomfort caused to the body.] (5).

6. [This verse describes Pranayam, or the various breath control exercises.]

Pranayam¹ is defined as a process involving three steps—viz. (a) ‘Purak’² which is done by using sixteen Matras, (b) ‘Kumbhak’³ which is done by using sixty-four Matras, and (c) ‘Rechak’⁴ which is done by using thirty-two Matras by the wise one (6).

[Note—¹The word *Pranayam* refers to the control of the breath employing various meditative techniques. It has the following three components as follows—

²*Purak*—This is inhalation of breath or fresh air through the nostrils. The time taken to do so is determined by the time taken to say or remember the sixteen ‘Matras’ which are the Sanskrit vowel sounds which form the basis of all Mantras, which are the various words or phrases made up of letters or syllables having divine and mystical powers.

The word ‘Matra’ here also refers to a measurement of time, usually in seconds. Hence, sixteen Matras mean sixteen seconds.

³*Kumbhak*—This is the stage when the inhaled breath is held inside the body for a given period of time. The time for which it should be held is determined by the time taken to say or remember the above Matras four times, i.e. sixty-four Matras are pronounced. This is because there are in all sixteen Matras, and when they are repeated four times, the total comes to sixty-four. It also means a time of sixty-four seconds.

⁴*Rechak*—This is the last stage when the held breath is vented out or exhaled from the body, taking the time which is twice the time taken to inhale it, i.e. the time taken to say thirty-two Matras. It also means a time of thirty-two seconds. Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/95-97.

The scientific logic is that the fresh oxygen-laden pure air that is inhaled inside the body is taken slowly so that it is able to energise the blood vessels connected to the nostrils and the lung-complex. Then when it is held inside the body for a given length of time as prescribed, it is able to oxidize the internal tissues and collect toxic gases and other residual waste matters that have gone up and collected in the lungs with the help of the various vital winds, especially the Vyan, Samaan and Udaan, and needs to be expelled much like the waste residual gases etc. are eliminated through the chimney of a factory. Finally, it is spouted out of the body during the process of Rechak, or exhalation.]

7. [This verse describes Pratyahar.]

Pratyahar is defined as the control of the mind and the intellect from getting engrossed with, attached to, lured by, or attracted towards the various sense objects of this material world. In other words, it is the control of the various senses of perception

that compulsively impel a man towards this artificial world and consequentially get trapped in its snare (7).

8. [This verse describes Dharna]

Dharna is defined as focusing of the mind-intellect complex upon the truthful entity which is pure consciousness with firmness of conviction and steadfastness of beliefs, which would involve pulling the mind-intellect away from the objects of the senses, and taming its wayward and reckless habits (8).

9. [This verse describes Dhyan.]

Dhyan has been defined as constant remembrance of and contemplation on the universal metaphysical Truth—that the same supreme, transcendental, divine and pure entity is universally and uniformly present in all the living creatures who have a gross body in this creation/ visible world as their eternal consciousness (called the Atma) (9).

10. [This verse describes the essential meaning of Samadhi.]

Samadhi is defined as the state when the spiritual aspirant/seeker need not consciously contemplate upon the pure consciousness. He has reached the transcendental state of consciousness which is like being numb or being senseless when all thoughts cease. Here, even Dhyan (i.e. memory, recall, remembrance) is forgotten. Such a state becomes natural to an enlightened spiritual seeker; it does not require any kind of conscious effort on his part. It is a perpetual state of remaining engrossed in self awareness, and which is marked by total unawareness of the external world. [When this state reaches its climax, the aspirant continues to go about his routine work in this world, doing his duties normally, but internally he remains aloof and does not even remember what he has done and what he is supposed to do next.] (10).

11. All the above eight terms succinctly define the finer aspects of Yoga (which is contemplation and meditation upon the pure consciousness called the true self or the Atma). A person who understands these basic principles of Yoga and self-realisation becomes eligible and competent to attain Mukti, i.e. he is entitled to attain emancipation and salvation for his soul; he becomes eligible for liberation and deliverance (11).

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Brahman 1, Section 2

1. The body has five faults or shortcomings—viz. Kaam (worldly lust, desires, passions and yearnings), Krodh (anger, wrathfulness), Asthma or obstruction of breath, Bhaya (fear of physical harm), and Nidra (sleep, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties) (1).

2. These faults which translate into spiritual impediments can respectively be overcome by the following methods—viz. to be without any desires whatsoever, to be forgiving and tolerant, to eat less and moderately, to be strong, brave and courageous, and to constantly

devote time and energy in contemplation and meditating upon the essential and true nature of things, called Tattwa Sevanam (i.e. to keep the mind from lying idle and instead keep it occupied in introspection and engrossed in deep thoughts of what constitutes the reality and truth) (2).

3. In this ocean-like intractable world, sleep (symbolising being ignorant and oblivious of the reality and true essence) and fear (symbolising consternation and feeling of insecurity)¹ are like serpents; cruelty and violence (indicating lack of such virtues as compassion, mercy, kindness, love, grace, benevolence) are like strong waves; avarice, greed, desires, yearnings and rapacity are like whirlpools; and the desire for enjoying sensual pleasures from the company of a woman is like the slushy swamp (from where it is difficult to extricate oneself and remain clean).

To get across such a formidably powerful and relentlessly entrapping world, one should proceed cautiously ahead through the narrow tunnel-like path which is especially designed for this purpose. While doing so, one should not allow oneself to be entangled in the so-called three Gunas or qualities such as 'Satta' etc.¹ (because they bog him down in formalities of attempting to do what is good and avoiding what is not good, thereby sapping him of his energy and time.) He should rather concentrate his energy in realising the vision of accessing that Brahm which is called 'Tarak' because it can provide liberation and deliverance to the person, freeing him from the trap represented by this artificial and sensual world of materialistic objects (3).

[Note—¹There are basically three Gunas or qualities or virtues that are inherent in all the creatures of the creation. These Gunas determine what type of nature and behaviour that particular person displays. Since the possibilities in which these three Gunas can combine are immense, the nature, character, outlook, behaviour and habits of men also present numerous possibilities. These three Gunas briefly are (a) Satta are the righteous, noble and good ones, (b) Raja or the medium ones which are marked by worldly tendencies, such as having worldly passions and desires, and (c) Tama are the lowest ones which lead to commitment of sins and having perversions. If a man is too concerned by the category to which his deed and action belongs, and then trying to find out remedies to rectify the errors made, then he would have no time and energy left for pursuing other noble aims.

This does not mean that he should be licentious and reckless by not bothering too much in observing the restrictions on his conduct, but that he should understand the basic function of classification of qualities into three categories—which is to act as a reference manual to guide him when he is undecided what is to be done and what is not to be done. But if this attempt to adhere to codes of conduct causes more perplexities, doubts and confusions than removing them, then a wise person should not be too obsessed in such things, and instead focus his attention on his goal. And what is this goal? It is the 'Brahm'—or the knowledge of the eternal and ultimate quintessential Truth, the purity and divinity of consciousness, as well as the various virtues that are incumbent with self-realisation—which can provide him with liberation and deliverance. This is why Brahm and the knowledge of Truth is called 'Tarak'.]

4. The emancipating and salvation providing supreme Brahm, who is an embodiment of true, eternal and pure bliss, is endowed with a divine radiance, is self-illuminated, and is an epitome and citadel of all forms of holiness and divinity, is symbolically seated or located at the junction point of the two eyebrows¹ (at the central point between the two eyebrows and the root of the nose) (4).

[Note—¹This point is the site of the ‘Agya Chakra’, or the subtle energy centre which ignites erudition and wisdom in a man. It radiates light like a lighted wick of a candle. The light here stands for erudition, wisdom, sagacity, enlightenment and truthful knowledge of the reality. This is the site where the third eye of wisdom is said to be located. Hence, Brahm is deemed to be at the core of, at the centre of all types of enlightening knowledge that the creature has.]

5. As one of the methods of attaining it (i.e. accessing that Brahm which can grant the boon of emancipation and salvation), one should concentrate one’s attention on this ‘third eye’ (5).

[Note--That is, if one wishes to achieve success in attaining the truthful knowledge of the reality, then he should endeavour to acquire knowledge of that quintessential reality, and to do so he must concentrate upon opening the closed eye of wisdom located at the place described in verse no. 4 above. Once this eye is opened, or once the light of knowledge is switched on, it would illuminate the aspirant’s inner self and remove its darkness symbolising ignorance, delusions and misconceptions about the world, about his own self, and about the reality.]

6. Extending from the Muladhar Chakra (located at the lowest end of the abdomen, between the anus and the genitals) right up to the Brahm Randhra (the hair like slit on the top of the skull) is the Naadi (the tubular duct that carries vital energy and sense stimuli in the body; the nerve) named ‘Sushumna’. This Naadi is radiant like the splendorous sun. [That is, Sushmna Naadi is glorious like the sun; it effuses light of life like the sun].

This is a very fine, hair-like filament that has its origin in center of the ‘Kundalini’ (which is the coiled energy centre located at the base of the spine, and which blocks the opening of this Naadi, unless it is diligently opened by means of meditative exercises of Yoga). By the awareness or knowledge of this Kundalini and Sushmna Naadi, one is able to overcome one’s lowly qualities called ‘Tamaguna’. By its symbolic ‘Darshan’, i.e. by experiencing and witnessing its stupendous spiritual powers which are effusing from it like an effulgence of divine light, one is able to destroy or annihilate all his sins and misdeeds¹ (6).

[Note--¹That is, when one meditates and is able to de-clog this Naadi by activating the Kundalini, the process of which is described in the Upanishads dealing with the subject, the spiritually-inclined energy which was until recently dormant and trapped inside the Kundalini is now released, and it goes up the Sushmna Naadi and activates the brain, i.e. the mind and intellect located in the head, with the right quantum of energy. That is, now the mind and intellect is getting noble and auspicious stimuli and energised by noble and righteous thought waves which symbolise the Sata qualities, instead of those that had negative energy symbolised by the predominance of Tama qualities, and which were denigrating and demeaning for the man.

This in turn makes the man more wise and enlightened; he is able to discriminate between what is good, noble and righteous, and what is not. This is a metaphoric way of saying that his Tam quality dominated mind is done away with, and its place is taken over by the mind that has better and nobler qualities called Sata in it. As a result, the man’s whole personality, his entire outlook and behavioural pattern undergoes a dramatic change for the better. A wise and enlightened person would not commit any kind of willful misconduct or engage himself in doing anything that is not righteous and noble and not behooving of his spiritually exalted stature. This is the symbolic way of saying that his sins are destroyed by having the Darshan of Kundalini. It will be observed that

this Sushumna Naadi resembles the wick passing through the center of a candle. This wick starts at the bottom of the candle and goes right up to its tip. Similarly, the Sushumna Naadi starts at the base of the spine and goes right up to the top of the head.]

7. When the aspirant closes his ears with the tip of his index fingers, then he hears a muted puffing sound as if a whiff of air was blowing gently inside the ear (which is actually the sound of breath passing through the nostrils). When the mind is fixed (or is focused, concentrated) on this sound, the aspirant perceives a bluish glow of light in the middle or centre of his two eyes (i.e. at the tri-junction of the eyebrows and the nose as described in verse no. 5). The same light is visualised in the heart (7).

[Note—This bluish tinge is symbolic of the colour of the clear, cloudless sky. It stands for something that has the qualities which are equivalent to the virtues possessed by the clean sky—viz. vast, fathomless, pure, untainted, infinite, eternal, immutable and immanent. Knowledge and truth both possess these qualities. The point of the body mentioned in this verse is the location of Brahm as mentioned in verse no. 3 above. Since the terms ‘Brahm’ and ‘sky’ are often considered equivalent to each other and often used synonymously, because they have many virtues in common though the latter (sky) does not define the former (Brahm) in its entirety, and since the sky is blue in colour, the light effusing from Brahm, i.e. the light of enlightenment and wisdom, is taken to be of a blue hue. The blue colour stands for tranquility, peace and endlessness.]

8. An aspirant becomes an accomplished Yogi (i.e. an ascetic who has attained success in meditation and is able to subtly observe the presence of Brahm in his own self) when he is able to visibly see the sky tinged with various colours in front of his nose. These colours of the sky progressively appear as follows—at a distance of four fingers from the tip of the nose he sees the sky as having a blue colour; at a distance of eight fingers the sky appears to have a black colour; at a distance of ten fingers it appears to have a red colour; and at a distance of twelve fingers the sky appears to have a yellow colour. Besides these principal colours, the Yogi may also see the sky as having a mixture of these colours (8).

9. Through the eyes which are always fickle and restless, the aspirant sees these colours of the sky in front for a period of time. Gradually he is able to perceive some fount of light that radiates rays from it.

[In other words, first he simply sees different shades of colours as mentioned above. But slowly, by constant practice, he begins to see a subtle point source of light in these coloured areas of the sky. This point gives out a light much like the tip of a lighted lamp or candle which is surrounded by a halo, and the different colours that appear in the sky resemble the various hues of colours seen during the day in the physical sky above the surface of the earth when the sunlight gets dispersed and refracted by different impurities present in space—such as moisture, dust particles, cloud etc. It is often observed in an overcast sky that the sun is obscured but the sky has changing colours, but gradually the sun appears as a faint lighted disc from behind the haze, and as time progresses the disc gets brighter and brighter till the time the sun is so brilliant and dazzling that no one can see it.]

This vision gives stability to the fickleness of the eyes and the restless nature of the faculty of sight, and instead makes it focused, concentrated and steady. They are able to

fix their gaze (attention) on a given target or aim or goal, without wavering and flickering (9).

[Note--In other words, with the regular practice of Yoga, the spiritual aspirant is able to fix his attention on the goal of his spiritual pursuit instead of wandering here and there; this fixing of sight is a metaphor for being able to concentrate one's attention on the chosen goal, which in this case is the realisation of the self, realisation of the ultimate Truth known as Brahm. It is like searching for the sun in a cloudy and overcast sky. When the cloud disperses, one is able to see the sun. Prior to that, one sees here and there to locate the sun in the sky, but fails. As soon as that point source of celestial light is visible, one fixes one's attention (sight) on it. The fickleness of the eyes would then stop because the target is clearly visible.]

10. As one progresses in his spiritual endeavour, by and by he observes (witnesses, experiences) a glow of divine light at a distance of twelve fingers above the head. Such a person obtains eternity (because he symbolically observes the radiant and splendorous Brahm shining above him much like the Sun God shining above the world and giving it its much needed energy and light for its life and sustenance). This is the highest vision of Yoga (10).

11-12. The medium range of Yogic vision is like visualizing the sky in the morning hours when the sun, the moon and the fire of the sun are not there. That is, the sky is aglow with a diffused light that pervades it uniformly from all sides. From where this light comes (i.e. either the sun or the moon) is not visible¹. This sky appears to be vast and endless. With this view or vision, the ascetic symbolically becomes one like it—i.e. he also becomes one who has no end; his vision of life and his perceptions of the world become holistic and all-inclusive; his mind and intellect become lighted uniformly with the light of self-realisation which glows to dispel the darkness of ignorance much like the diffused early morning light in the sky that removes the darkness of the preceding night (11-12).

[Note—¹In the early morning sky at the time of dawn, neither the sun nor the moon are visible. The light that prevails at that time goes on getting brighter by the minute and the hour. Its appearance has removed the darkness of the past night. All these have symbolic significance here. Like the non-visibility of the source of light, Brahm is also not visible. But even as there cannot be the morning light without the presence of the self-illuminated and brilliant sun just round the corner, there cannot be existence and life, there cannot be consciousness and knowledge without the presence of Brahm just about to make its appearance if the aspirant has perseverance and patience to wait and welcome the experience of Brahm realisation just like a man who has to wait for a little more time for the sun to make its appearance with all its glorious splendour.

The sky appears calm and refreshingly quiet in the morning. The sky is an entity which is without an end. Similarly, a Yogi who has successfully realised Brahm becomes as calm and as infinite as the sky.

Again, as the light of the morning sky gradually goes on increasing, the spiritual enlightenment and divine energy of a Yogi also goes on enhancing by the day.

The divine halo that surrounds the Yogi is diffused like the light of the early morning sky—soothing, effusing in all its glory, and illuminating for others, removing their darkness symbolised by delusions and other faults associated with this world.]

13. [In this verse, the Sun God describes the other four subtle skies from the perspective of metaphysics. Refer also to Brahman 4.]

With due diligent practice, the aspirant Yogi (ascetic) becomes without any faults or blemishes that taint ordinary people; he goes beyond or transcends the reach of the three Gunas or qualities (which are Sata, Raja and Tama), and he becomes one like the sky called 'Akash', which is the sky present just above the earth. [That is, he acquires virtues which are similar to the ones possessed by the sky]¹

With greater diligence, perseverance and practice, he becomes one like the deep recesses of the space which has bright stars in it². This sky is called 'Parakash', or the sky which is beyond the ordinary sky or the one which transcends the normal definition of the sky.

Beyond it is the sky lit by a brilliant light called 'Kalagni' which resembles the light that appears at the time of dooms-day. That is, there is total darkness here, symbolising total peace and elimination of all awareness of the existence of tormenting life in this mortal world. This sky is called 'Mahakash'³.

After that is the sky called the 'Tattwakash'⁴, literally meaning the essential or the principal factor that is at the core of the sky element and acts as its defining virtue. It symbolises the presence of the essential Truth, called the Tattwa, in the form of the fundamental virtues that characterise the qualities displayed by the sky.

And finally there is the sky which is radiant and splendid with the light of millions of suns, and it is called 'Suryakash'⁵. [Brahm or the 'Truth' actually symbolically resides here. A parallel is drawn between the place where the self-illuminated Brahm resides and the sky where the splendid sun lives to highlight the fact that just like the presence of the visible sun cannot be denied, the presence of Brahm too cannot be denied; just like the sun that illuminates the dark and fathomless bowls of the sky, the Brahm also illuminates the entire creation with its consciousness. The only practical difference between the physical sun and Brahm is the fact that the former (sun) can be perceived at the physical gross level of existence by means of seeing it with the eyes of the gross body while the latter (Brahm) can only be realised at the subtle level of consciousness. What the sun is to the gross visible world, Brahm is to the subtle invisible world. If the sun is 'true', then Brahm is also 'true'.] (13).

[Note--¹The sky is unattached with and to anything. The sky is illuminated during the day and it is the path through which the chariot of the Sun God passes. At night, the same sky is illuminated by the moon and adorned by the stars which appear like so many jewels spread across the vast sheet of the sky. The sky harbours so many varieties of life, such as birds and insects and other sky borne creatures of different species; all trees and plants grow up towards the sky, and they bloom in the sky, because if a flowering plant is closed in a box, it would wither away and die. The sky remains free from any taints and blemishes though it has so many colours that keep on changing their hues, but these are not the actual colours of the sky but are caused by scattering of the sunlight by the dust particles or moisture present in the air; the presence of innumerable heavenly bodies and debris do not affect the sky, nor do the presence of dark cloud darken the sky or the presence of the sun or the moon actually cause any change in the nature of the sky, for as soon as they set, the sky reverts to its original state of blankness and neutrality. Likewise, the Yogi remains the same no matter which circumstance he finds himself in; he remains uniform, even, calm, unruffled and taintless.

²The ascetic is compared to the Parakash to signify the fact that he has depth of vision and has reached much higher in his spiritual pursuits where light of pure consciousness automatically effuses from him.

³With progress of his practice, the ascetic is able to reach the state of perpetual Samadhi wherein the awareness of the visible world is totally eliminated. For all practical purposes, the world has become dark and dead for him. There is a complete silence of death around him. This is a metaphor for his state of mind that has ceased to exist vis-à-vis the external world.

⁴This sky is where the ascetic has an experience of the sky element; it also might refer to the state of consciousness when the ascetic realises the essential elements in their primary forms. This state is just before his one-on-one vision of the ultimate element—viz. the Truth, known as Brahm. This happens in the next sky.

⁵When he becomes more evolved in his yogic practice, the ascetic experiences a burst of divine light about him. This light is blinding and dazzling like the light of the heavenly sun; it is the light of self-realisation and symbolic of the realisation or witnessing of Brahm first hand.]

14. A person who becomes aware of this truthful eclectic knowledge is deemed to be lost as far as this material world is concerned, and he remains completely absorbed while diligently practicing the tenets of Yoga and described herein above (i.e. he becomes so engrossed in doing meditation and contemplation on the Truth that he loses all awareness of his own self as well as of the surrounding world) (14).

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Brahman 1, Section 3

1. The Yoga described earlier has two divisions—one called ‘Purva’ (i.e. the previous, former) and the other called ‘Uttar’ (i.e. the post, after, later half). The Purva Yoga is called ‘Tarak¹ Brahm’ (i.e. the Yoga which leads to realisation of the truthful Brahm which spiritually liberates the aspirant and delivers him from the shackles that tie him down to this body and its accompanying torments vis-à-vis the world), while the Uttar Yoga is known as ‘Amanasak’ (i.e. that leads him to become absolutely disinterested in this world and its illusionary charms, and consequentially lead a life of total renunciation and dispassion; such a man does not take an interest in anything pertaining to this deluding world and remains aloof from it; he remains engrossed in the bliss obtained by Brahm-realisation and thereby gets lost in his own self)².

The Tarak Brahm further has two categories—one is called ‘Murti Tarak’³ and the other is ‘Amurti Tarak’⁴. That Brahm (consciousness) which is limited to the sense organs is called Murti Tarak, while that which is beyond the purview of these senses and is even beyond the centre of the eyebrows (i.e. which is beyond the reach of even the mind) is called Amurti Tarak (1).

[Note—¹The word *Tarak* refers to that supernatural mystical authority that bestows liberation and deliverance to the Yogi (an ascetic who is a spiritual aspirant and a seeker of emancipation and salvation through the path of Yoga or mediation). Therefore, Tarak Brahm is that ultimate Truth the realisation of which sets the soul of the ascetic free from the bondage of this body consisting of the gross organs if he pursues it diligently and seeks to arouse his dormant divinity which had been hitherto lying dormant and

concealed in his own self which is wrapped in a host of worldly faults represented by his inherent Vrittis and Vasanas (habits, tendencies, inclinations as well as passions, yearnings, lusts etc. which pertain to the body and the sense objects of the gross material world).

²That is, when a man has realised the ultimate Truth, he becomes disinterested in falsehoods. So when he has realised the supreme transcendental Being through the process of Yoga, he becomes non-interested in this material world of sense objects and the deluding charm proffered by it. Therefore, he appears to be taciturn and forlorn in his demeanors and his day to day interactions with the world. So, in short, by realisation of the truthful essence known as Brahm which gives him liberation from fetters of ignorance, delusions and the illusionary images of this world, and instead helps him to extricate himself from their trap and become self aware, the ascetic shows the least inclination to get involved in the muck once again, though he has to live surrounded in it because of the fact that his sublime Atma has to reside in the gross physical body till the time comes for it to leave it at the time of his physical death. Until that time, he copes with the world and the body, but is so disenchanted with them both that he shows no interest in either of them.

³The word 'Murti' literally means an idol, a statue, an image, a form, that which has a shape. Hence, the *Murti Brahm* refers to the pure consciousness present in the various sense organs of the body which directs them to do good deeds and religious duties as a means of attainment of liberation or Mukti. The phrase might also refer to doing meditative exercises which invariably involve the body and its sense organs which are an image of Brahm because the various postures and other means of Yoga actively need the coordination of all the organs of the body. It might also mean physical worship of images (Murti) as well as observing other rituals that can only be done by the medium of the body and its sense organs, and not by mental contemplation and meditation. Mental worship would be 'Amurti' form of adoring the Brahm, while physical worship involving rituals, idols and organs of the body would be 'Murti' form of adoration of the same Brahm. Though this is also a means of emancipation and salvation, but since the gross and perishable body and its sense organs have their own limitations, they are not as effective as the superior form of meditation which eliminates the need or interference of the body and its sense organs. Another interpretation is as follows—a realised ascetic has become aware of the fact that all the living creatures, in fact the entire animate as well as the inanimate world, is nothing but a manifestation of the same ubiquitous Brahm. They are all Brahm's image, or Murti of Brahm. To show respect to each of them in equal intensity is equivalent to showing respect to Brahm. This awareness eliminates ignorance of the ultimate Truth about this creation—i.e. it paves the way for obtaining Mukti through worshipping 'Murti Brahm'. In other words, the Murti Brahm has a discernible form and ascertainable characteristic features that are physical manifestations of the Amurti Brahm, or the Supreme Being known as Brahm that has no form and attributes.

But as has been pointed out in the Upanishads elsewhere, this form of worship might give success in achieving mystical powers called the various 'Siddhis' which can enable the ascetic perform stupendous magical feats, they are nevertheless not beneficial for him if his main aim is to attain liberation from the cycle of birth and death. That is only possible when he has disassociated himself from his body, or the 'Murti' (image) of Brahm because this body is synonymous with the fetter that tie a soul to this world, and when this bondage is done away with then only is true liberation possible. So although the body is an useful mean of doing Yoga, and although worship of the manifested (Murti) form of Brahm has its value and importance, but their usefulness is limited to physical aspects of Yoga and worship and not to their higher ethereal forms which relate to the final emancipation and salvation of the spirit.

⁴The word ‘Amurti’ refers to the form of Brahm which has no discernible physical shape and characteristics, which is attributeless and formless. There the term ‘Amurti Brahm’ refers to that consciousness which prevails after the awareness of the body is eliminated, that consciousness which is the focus of the mind and intellect, that consciousness which exists in the transcendental plane—that is called *Amurti Brahm*. It is that Brahm which is beyond the purview of the body and which has no form, no shape, no attributes, no manifestations, no definitions and no descriptions. In other words, the Amurti Brahm has a ‘non-formed’ form as opposed to its manifested image as a ‘Murti Brahm’. It is the ultimate Truth that has no form but is nevertheless the absolute reality and the truth of creation.]

2. Both these forms of Brahm should be deeply contemplated upon sincerely by diligent application of the mind, because it is only the light of deep insight and intuition which one gets with the eyes of wisdom and enlightenment that can enable and entitle an aspirant to have a first hand experience of that (glorious, magnificent, divine, ethereal, supreme, transcendental, eclectic and holy) Brahm (2).

[Note—This is the Brahm who is known as ‘Tarak’ because he can provide liberation and deliverance to the soul of the creature.]

3. With the progress in practice and over a period of time, there appears a glorious effulgence of a shaft of brilliant light from the pin-hole like subtle aperture said to be present between the two eyebrows. This light is synonymous with the Purva (previous) vision of Tarak Brahm (3).

[Note—By focusing one’s attention on the truth of Brahm with sincere and deep desire to know about him, to experience and witness him, the aspirant ascetic/Yogi first controls his sense organs. Then he concentrates his attention on the spot which is called the ‘Agya Chakra’. This is the subtle energy centre in the body, located between the eyebrows, which can unfold the hidden spiritual powers to see the unseen. By focusing of the mental powers of concentration at this focal point just like the beam of laser being focused on a particular object, that pin-hole is managed to be opened, and the inherent divine light that was previously concealed behind the veil of ignorance is now brought to the fore. The ‘light of enlightenment’ then shines through like a beam of torchlight, and it illuminates the subtle space in front of his nose with colours of different hues as described in Brahman 1, section 2, verse no. 8. Since the appearance of this glorious light is the first indication of the Yogi’s success in Brahm realisation, i.e. that he has been successful in opening the hitherto closed eye of wisdom and enlightenment located at the central point of the eyebrows, it is called ‘Purva Tarak’ or the first part of Brahm realisation that would lead to the ultimate success in realisation of Brahm in its full glory in the later half, called ‘Uttar Tarak’. Brahm is synonymous with enlightenment, so this light is the illumination emanating from the Tarak Brahm who resides in the aspirant himself but was hidden from his view until he had made a sincere attempt to unravel the great secret of Brahm.

Even as the torchlight can illuminate the path in the darkest of nights, this light of wisdom and enlightenment that comes with self-realisation can illuminate the spiritual path of the seeker of Truth.]

4. The Uttar division or the second part of this Yoga of Brahm realisation is called ‘Amanasak’ (as mentioned earlier in verse no. 1 above). It is marked by total elimination of the mind; or by the total non-involvement of the mind. That is, the mind has no role to

play here. This state goes beyond the reach and purview of the mind-intellect complex of the Yogi. It is said that a majestic and immense fount of brilliant light resides or is located in the upper edge of the root of the tongue, or at the rear end of the palate in the mouth.

When the aspirant Yogi is able to witness and experience that light as result of persistent practice, he is able to acquire the various mystical powers known as Siddhis, such as Anima etc.¹ (4).

[Note—¹There are eight mystical powers that can be accessed by those who become expert in doing Yogic exercises. But it must be noted that these mystical powers can give worldly fame and glory, but they cannot deliver the aspirant from the snare of this cycle of birth and death. This is only possible by concentrating upon the Tarak Brahm located in the centre of the eyebrows. It must be understood that this Tarak Brahm is so-called because it has the potential to provide liberation and deliverance to the spiritual aspirant seeking it, and as has been described earlier, this location is the site of the third eye of wisdom and erudition. So it follows that what actually gives liberation and deliverance is the truthful knowledge of the reality, the 'true' reality and not the 'apparent' reality, which helps one to overcome the illusions of reality that are created by ignorance and delusions. Therefore, what is important is the acquisition of the correct and true knowledge which is laced with erudition and wisdom that can enlighten a person about his true self and the falsehood of the materialistic world of sense objects.

Brahman 1, section 2, verse no. 10 tells us that the divine light that is observed at the top of the head is the provider of eternity. Inside the body, it is the supreme Brahm located in the Brahm Randhra that is the final destination for the seekers of this light symbolising eternity. This Brahm Randhra is the hair-like slit on the top of the head. It is believed that at the time of death, a truly realised Yogi's vital winds called his Pran makes its exit from this slit to enable his Atma to merge with the supreme Brahm present in the vast sky outside his body. So, if the effulgence of light that is subtly witnessed in the central point of the eyebrows is known as 'Purva Tarak', it naturally follows that the brilliant shaft of light radiating out from the Brahm Randhra on the top of the head would be the 'Uttar Tarak'. The word 'Uttar' also implies the northern direction, or the top, or the zenith. The location of Brahm Randhra is at the 'zenith of the body', and hence the Brahm visualised here is 'Uttar Tarak Brahm'.

So it can be safely assumed that the various mystical powers called *Siddhis* are sought by those Yogis who are not so evolved in the hierarchy of spiritualism because though these Siddhis bestow him with stupendous magical prowess, they don't guarantee his spiritual emancipation and salvation. That comes with 'Uttar Tarak Brahm' only. Nevertheless, those Yogis who have been successful in acquiring these mystical powers employ them for the benefit of others and not for their own selfish ends. These eight Siddhis are the following--(i) 'Anima' means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) 'Mahima' is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one's achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) 'Garima' is to have weight, stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) 'Laghima' is to have simplicity and humility; (v) 'Praapti' is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) 'Prakramya' is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) 'Ishwatwa' is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) 'Vashitwa' is to be able to control and subdue others.]

5. When the Yogi focuses both his sights—the internal sight of wisdom and insight, as well as the external sight of the physical eyes—constantly, persistently, unwaveringly and unblinkingly on the object or target, which in this case is Brahm, then it is called ‘Shambhivi Mudra’¹.

Amid all the forms of occult mystical practices pertaining to Brahm realisation, called the Tantra², this is the most profound and the most esoteric form of Vidya (knowledge and science). With this knowledge and awareness, one is able to get liberation and deliverance from this mundane, artificial, deluding and materialistic entrapping world of sense objects.

Worship of this truthful, transcendental and supreme form of Truth known as Brahm bestows the spiritual seeker with the fruit or reward of ‘Moksha’, i.e. it provides him with emancipation and salvation for his soul (5).

[Note—¹The *Shambhivi Mudra* is one of the various postures of Yoga adopted during meditation by ascetics. It involves sitting in a Padmasan (crossed-legged, erect spine and open palms resting upon the laps in the front) and concentrating one’s line of vision/sight at a point on the tip of the nose or in the tri-junction of the eyebrows and the root of nose. See also Brahman 2, section 1, verse no.5, and Brahman 3, section 1, verse no.1 in this context.

²The *Tantras* are the mystical religious treatises supposed to be compiled by Lord Shiva, the patron God of ascetics and hermits, containing mystical charms and secret formulas for the attainment of supernatural powers. This occult science and its prescribed esoteric form of worship involve elaborate rituals, magical charms, use of mystical formulas and instruments, offering of sacrifices etc.

There are three dimensions of Tantra—(a) Mantra, (b) Yantra and (c) Tantra. Mantra is pure sound, and it consists of various monosyllables and letters pertaining to specific Gods much like alphabets used in algebra and other branches of mathematics as well as in complex physics diagrams to depict various coded information and data. Every sound has an energy wave associated with it which takes a definite form depending upon the frequency, amplitude and other aspects as proved by an oscilloscope. The seed or root words forming the Mantra are the purest forms of sound. The Yantra is the physical form that these sounds take, and is depicted in the form of a diagram or sketch having various Mantras like a text book of music. Yantra is an instrument to use the Mantra much like the musical instrument is used for the purpose of transforming the magic of sound to produce a captivating and enchanting music which has a therapeutic value as well. Again, a Yantra is like an instrument of physics that uses various components to create a machine that can generate stupendous powers that are beyond the scope of these individual components when they are kept separately. The Yantra is like a figure in geometry that uses lines and different alphabets to mark various parameters, and then uses these parameters to deduce some fundamental truths of science, whether it is in the realm of mathematics or of physics. The Mantras are these coded alphabets, and the Yantra is the sketch that is used to tap their potentials to provide supernatural powers to the person who uses them.]

6. That supreme, mysterious, eclectic, sublime but indescribable entity subtly seen or visualised or experienced or witnessed in the bosom or the inner self of the creature is

like a radiant, splendid and bright fount of illumination. [This illumination is the glorious Atma which is pure consciousness personified.]

It can only be realised, witnessed and experienced at the subtlest level and not at the gross physical plane by great sages and seers. It is not visible or perceivable by any external or internal organs of the gross body (such as the external organs like the eye etc., or the internal organs like the mind and intellect). [In other words, the gross organs are not capable of grasping something that is subtler than the subtlest, and smaller than the smallest. 'That' divine entity is the pure consciousness known as the Atma which is the supreme Brahman personified] (6).

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Brahman 1, Section 4

1. The 'Antarlakshya', literally meaning 'that which is seen inside', is that entity which is the object of deep insight and is visualised in a subtle form inside the bosom of the creature. It is said to be a fount of brilliant light emanating from a self-illuminated lotus with a thousand petals. Some say that it is like a most charming and beautiful 'Purush', or pure consciousness personified, who is secretly ensconced in the cave-like intellect of the creature. [In olden times, great sages and enlightened souls retired inside deep mountain caves to meditate and contemplate in solitude, hence the reference to a cave. It is inside the cave that great secrets of life were revealed to them, away from the glare of worldly delusions. In other words, this divine entity known as Purush is enlightenment and wisdom incarnate. This Purush is represented by the fundamental property of the faculty of intellect to discriminate and distinguish between what is righteous and auspicious and what is not. This magnificent divine entity which is the object of internal vision delineates a wise, self-realised and enlightenment man from an unwise, worldly, ignorant and deluded man.]

So many others believe that the eternally calm, peaceful, serene, tranquil, blissful and contented form of Lord Shiva with five heads, a blue-tinged throat and accompanied by his divine consort named Uma (Parvati), is the Lord that is the target of inner vision; he is the so-called 'Antarlakshya'. This Lord symbolically resides in the heavenly space located at the top of the head (i.e. in the region of the Brahm Randhra)¹.

There are others who say that the supreme Purush measuring the size of a thumb is the entity that is worth seeking and witnessing in the bosom of the creature. [This Purush is in the form of the eternal pure conscious Atma present in the heart of the creature.] (1).

[Note--¹There is another symbolism here—the head is like the heaven for the creature because of the fact that it is located in the upper part of the body, and also because the supreme authority that governs all the organs of the body, both the external organs as well as the internal organs, is represented by the mind and intellect, and the latter are also located here. Further, Lord Shiva is regarded as the wisest of the Gods; he is personified bliss, peace, dispassion, renunciation, enlightenment and wisdom. He symbolises the virtues of auspiciousness and purity. He is the patron God of hermits, ascetics and monks. He remains perpetually in a state of Samadhi or in a state of constant contemplation and meditation. He is the only God having the third eye of wisdom indicating the fact that he is the wisest, most erudite and enlightened amongst the Gods.]

2. All the alternative forms described hereinabove are but the various manifestations of the same consciousness known as the Atma. Anyone who observes or visualises that (radiant and illuminated) target or object present in the inner chamber of the bosom (core of the heart; the inner self) with the conviction that it is the pure conscious Atma, is said to be firmly established, without wavering and doubting, in his beliefs, convictions and views of the supreme transcendental Brahm. [He is said to be the one who has had the truthful view of Brahm, without distortions of any kind.] (2).

3. The Jiva (the living creature) is the twenty-fifth 'Tattwa'¹ or elementary form in which the entire creation exists. [That is, out of all the variations in which the creation came into existence, there is an entity known as a living being or a living creature with a body. This is a general term to define all living creatures that have a body—whether it be an animal, a bird, an insect or a human being. Incidentally, humans are included in the animal kingdom, and not, say, in the plant kingdom, or are categorised as any chemicals or metals or alloys etc. by even modern day scientists. In other words, 'Jiva' is a general term to include all living beings which have a soul.]

Besides this twenty-fifth elementary form of creation, there are twenty four other elements. When the wise and enlightened person thinks that 'he', i.e. his truthful and real identity and his essential form, is beyond any of these twenty five elementary forms in which the creation exists, then he comes to realise that he himself is the 'Parmatma', i.e. he is a personification and a synonym of the supreme transcendental Soul or Atma. He realises that he is the cosmic soul personified as the Jiva. [Here, the self-realised man understands the true meaning of the word Atma—that entity which is eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent and supreme, that which is beyond the reach and grasp of the mind and the intellect, that which is at the core of spiritual research and contemplation, and that which is the cause of all that exists].

When this realisation dawns upon him, he is deemed to be liberated and delivered from this mundane, artificial, entrapping and delusory world even while living in it with a gross and perishable body. He is called 'Jivan Mukta' or a person who has obtained liberation of all bondages in this life itself. [In other words, a truly wise man understands that his 'self' is the pure conscious Atma (soul, spirit) that resides in his own bosom, and it is distinct from the physical gross body. The Atma is subtle, sublime and ethereal, while the body is gross, perishable and mundane. This awareness about the truthful identity, about his 'real self' as opposed to 'apparent self', liberates a wise and enlightened man from being tied to his pseudo identity known as the body. He kind of de-links his 'true self' from his 'pseudo self or apparent self'. This is tantamount to breaking free from the fetters of delusions and ignorance that had made him believe till now that his body is his 'self', and there is nothing beyond the gross body that can be called 'me or I'. As we have seen, this is a total erroneous perception of the true self.] (3).

[Note—¹The word *Tattwa* mentioned in this verse has many connotations as follows—(i) the true, essential and primary or fundamental aspect of anything; (ii) the elementary reality; (iii) the true or real state; (iv) the primary Prakriti-Nature; (v) the truthful nature of the Atma or soul of individual creature at the micro level as well as that at the macro level of the Atma which is universal, all-pervading, omnipresent, transcendental and almighty Soul of the entire creation; (vi) the 'Mana' consisting of the mind

and the heart complex; (vii) the Sun; (viii) the universal, eternal elements that form the basic building blocks of the entire creation; (ix) elementary form in which the entire creation exists.

(A) According to Harvansha Puran, 14840, and Mahabharat, xii, 11242, there are *twenty-four* basic elements or Tattwas. These twenty-four fundamental Elements or Tattwas are the essential ingredients which go in to make up the body of a creature, and they are—(a) Prakriti (nature, inherent tendencies and inclinations, the fundamental truth about anything that decide its character and existential mode); (b) Buddhi (intellect, wisdom, discrimination); (c) Ahankar (pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness); (d) the eleven organs (five organs of perceptions—eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue; five organs of action—hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory; one organ of intelligence—mind); and (e) the five vital Prans (the vital winds that regulate life in a creature—Pran or the life giving breath, Apan or the wind which passes down the intestines and regulates digestion and excretion, Samaan or the wind that helps in even distribution of nourishment in the body, Vyan or the wind that maintains equilibrium in the body, and Udaan or the wind that helps to rise); and (f) the five perceptions (sight, touch, smell, taste and hearing) bringing the total to = $1+1+1+1+5+5 = 24$.

(B) According to Sankhya Shastra, there are *twenty-five* fundamental Elements or Tattwas as follows—one Avyakta (the unmanifest supreme entity) + one Buddhi (intellect, wisdom, discrimination) + one Ahankar (the inherent ego and pride that is integral to all the creatures) + five Tanmatras (senses—sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste) + eleven organs (five organs of perception—eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue respectively + five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genital) + one Purush (the macrocosmic Male aspect of creation; the Viraat Purush who is all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent, eternal, infinite, unmanifest and almighty Lord of creation; the macrocosmic gross body of creation).

According to Mahopanishad, 1/4 – 69 of Sam Veda tradition, these twenty-five elements or Tattwas are the following—five organs of perception (ear, nose, tongue, eye, skin) + five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, genitals, excretory) + one Mana (mind) + one Ahankar (ego, pride, arrogance) + one Pran (the vital life-giving breath; the essential vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life) + one Atma (soul) + one Buddhi (intelligence, wisdom, discrimination) + five Perceptions (sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch) + five Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air, space) = twenty-five elements.

(C) The *twenty-sixth* Tattwa or Element is 'Hiranya-garbh', the cosmic subtle body of creation, or the cosmic golden egg from which Viraat had emerged.

(D) The *twenty-seventh* Tattwa or Element is known as 'Ishwar', the macrocosmic causal body of creation. Obviously, all these elements are junior to the primary source called the Supreme Being or Brahm. Therefore, the Supreme Being or Brahm is neither the creature nor the Purush; he is neither the visible world nor the invisible creation taken independently. He is beyond such limiting definitions. Therefore, he has certain qualities that do not fall within the ambit of ordinary creation; he has some extraordinary elements that are beyond the realm of comprehension.

The concept of 'Jivan Mukti' has been repeatedly emphasised in the Upanishads. For instance, refer to the following Upanishads of the Shukla

Yajur Veda: (i) Paingal Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 5, and (ii) Mukti Upanishad.]

4. In this way, while experiencing and witnessing the pure consciousness which is perceived inside his very bosom, that spiritual aspirant/seeker of the Truth gradually progresses towards the state of 'Jivan Mukti' (see verse no. 3), and in due course of time he becomes one like the glorious illuminated entity that was being hitherto witnessed and experienced inside his bosom. Gradually, this exalted state of self-realisation which has made him freed from the limitations imposed by the gross body also enables him to rise higher in his spiritual pursuit and become one like the sky which is infinite, fathomless, eternal, immutable, colourless and uncorrupt. [In other words, self-realisation makes a man feel freed from the limitations that are inherent in a gross body. This is because his 'true self', i.e. the Atma, is the universal ethereal spirit which has no physical limitations or boundaries to hem it in, or which it needs to overcome or cross over to find freedom. This spirit has the nearest analogue in the air or wind element which pervades throughout the sky, and it can go wherever it likes; nothing can tie the wind. Therefore, a man freed from the limiting fetters of the physical body assumes a symbolic form which acquires all the universal characteristics of the sky element. He becomes one without limits.] (4).

[Note--After one is able to witness and experience the presence of the self-illuminated and conscious Atma inside one's own heart, he realises that what he was hitherto considering to be his own self, i.e. his body, is not his true identity; rather it was a vehicle to carry him during his sojourn in this world till the time the effects of his past deeds do not wear out. He realises that his 'truthful' self is the glorious Atma which is pure consciousness. This awareness fills him with a sense of majesty and happiness because now he does not have to feel depressed by the various problems and inherent faults associated with the gross body. This sets him free from the bondage of serfdom of the body; he is liberated from its pains, sufferings, shortcomings and blemishes. He becomes his 'true self' which is glorious, magnificent, stupendous and powerful, and which is an image or incarnate manifestation of the majestic Lord of creation. Obviously, when one realises about his exalted lineage and heritage, he feels exhilarated and fulfilled, not having any dearth of anything.

In other words, such a self-realised man becomes literally liberated from the fetters of ignorance that had him trapped in the false conception that the body is one's true self or identity, instead of the Atma. Such a man is freed from the imaginary shackle put on his soul. He remains free from this imaginary shackle even though he lives in this world with a body. He treats the body merely as vehicle or medium to complete his worldly journey which has been imposed upon him or which he has to undertake due to the cumulative effects of his past deeds. He also realises his folly of even thinking that he has done any deed, because he understands that the deeds are done by the body and not the Atma. Therefore, once these realities dawn upon him, he is not mentally and emotionally involved in any of the deeds done by the body in this birth, thereby accumulating nothing as 'past deed' that would force him to take another birth. This is called the state of 'Jivan Mukti'.

The spiritual vision of a person who has realised the truth about himself and the rest of the creation consisting of the same Truth broadens to include not only the view of his own self as the conscious Atma, but also to see that Atma everywhere in the rest of the creation; his vision expands to include the entire gamut of Truth which is not limited to his own self but extends to the rest of the creation as well. A wise and enlightened man is deemed to have realised that the consciousness known as the Atma is the fount of all

virtues, the very source and the cause of all that exists; therefore this Atma is also known as Brahm which is deemed to be the ultimate Truth and absolute Reality in creation as well as the cause of all that exists. This truth about the Atma is not limited only to him but it prevails everywhere just like the sky which is uniformly and universally present everywhere and is all inclusive; nothing exists that is not within the circumference or parameters or boundary of the sky; nothing exists outside the sky. Similarly, nothing exists outside the purview of the Atma, whether at the micro level of the individual creature, or at the macro level of the universe. This broadness of vision is metaphorically expressed by saying 'he becomes one like the sky'.

There is another interpretation of this statement. The realised soul understands that the Atma and Pran go hand in hand, because consciousness and life co-exist. There would be no use of having any 'life' without the presence of consciousness in a gross, inane and inert body, and what is the use of having 'consciousness' in such a body that has no life in it. To illustrate, suppose the man's body has life in it in the sense that it is alive and the man's external organs are functioning properly, but suppose that man is stupid, of a low intellect, does not have proper mental development which is in accordance with his age, or lives a pervert life full of sins and misdeeds, showing no signs of having any awareness of what is right and what is wrong, having no remorse or compunctions of any kind. He shows no signs of having any 'consciousness' in him, he is not 'conscious' about his responsibilities and duties; he is not 'conscious' about the righteous way of correct living, and lives a life like that of an animal! Then say, what is the use of this man living at all?

Further, we have cases when people are artificially kept alive by machines and medicines, though their mind and intellect have been non-functional for a given time. What good is having such a 'life'? Such a man rather becomes a burden on the society as well as on his own self.

Again, suppose a man is very wise and enlightened and conscious about his righteous duties and responsibilities. But then suppose that man is paralysed half down his body—that is, his lower part of the body has 'no life' in it. Then say what good is such consciousness which does not let him die and forces him to live a burdensome life like vegetation.

So we see that both 'consciousness' or the Atma and 'life' or Pran are vitally important for the man's existence to be worthwhile in this world. So, the realisation of the ultimate spiritual Truth while still living in this world and having a physical body—is called being 'Jivan Mukta'.]

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Brahman 2, Section 1

1. Then sage Yagyavalkya asked that divine Purush (the supreme macrocosmic Lord) present in the heaven personified as the illuminated Aditya or the Sun God, 'Oh Lord! A lot has been said about the entity known as 'Antarlakshya'. But I could not follow it properly. Please elucidate more upon it yourself (1).

[Note—The term 'Antarlakshya' has been described in Brahman 1, section 4 above.]

2. The Lord replied, 'The primary source from which the five Bhuts (i.e. the primary elements of creation, such as sky, air, fire, water and earth) emerged is as splendid and glorious as a radiant and dazzling fount of electric. It resembles the point from which the spark of electric streaks out. That point-source of the five Bhuts lies at the center of a

square seat or alter. That dazzling and splendid point illuminates or highlights the presence of the Tattva there, i.e. it pin-points the source from which the knowledge, wisdom, skill and expertise needed to initiate the process of creation springs forth along with the five Bhuts. [Without relevant knowledge and skills, the five Bhuts were of no use. They would have been wasted. Knowledge, skill and erudition along with the wisdom of how to utilise them are collectively symbolised by the light that emerged from the primary core of creation. In modern terms we can call it the central point of the Big Bang—the cosmic explosion that occurred at the start of the universe billions of years ago. This explosion resulted in the creation of five elements of varying density which would, in due course of time, transform themselves into the various components of the creation, including the earth and the planets of the solar system. In other words, this point where the Tattva resided is the core of that Big Bang, and the basic ingredients for creation, which we call the ‘five Bhuts’ in metaphysics, are like the primary ingredients that were formed by this Big Bang. The very fact that some activity was there even before the bang occurred because it just cannot happen if there was complete neutrality and balance in the various forces of Nature, this ‘Tattva’ refers to that primordial factor, the ‘truth’ that was there when the first sign of life began to show itself in creation.]

This brilliant source of light is too mysterious and esoteric and secret to be understood by the limited scope of the human mind. It is beyond comprehension; it cannot be defined or described. It is not visible to the eye as the physical gross organ of the body has a very limited range of vision. It is best visualised by those who have the requisite range of vision, and this comes with self-realisation of the potentials of the conscious Atma¹ [2].

[Note—¹The phenomenon that was at the core of the creation did occur, but it was in some hoary past, in some far distant point of time and corner of the cosmos where even the mind cannot reach in spite of its stupendous potentials and powers to imagine and visualise happenings that cannot be physically seen or witnessed. That is why that Tattva is designated as secret, mysterious, enigmatic, esoteric and unknown. But the fact that it did exist before the beginning of creation and which resulted in coming into being of this visible creation, which is tangible and verifiable first hand and is not merely a conjecture or imagination of the mind, the existence of the Tattva and the occurrence of that original phenomenon that created light and the five Bhuts just cannot be denied. Therefore, that element from which everything else sprung forth is called ‘Tattva’, or the true and fundamental essence from which all the rest emerged at the beginning of creation and gradually evolved into their present form.]

3. That indescribable, mysterious and strange entity (described above as Tattwa or essence having the brilliance of bright light) is worth knowing by a person who has boarded a boat of Gyan, i.e. who has sought the refuge or the help of truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and deep insight to help him cross over this ocean-like world of delusions and entrapments, and arrive at the Truth.

That eclectic entity should be the target of knowledge and realisation by diligent efforts made sincerely, both by the external means as well as by internal means (3).

[Note—By saying that both the external as well as the internal means should be employed to realise the Tattwa or the Truth, this verse implies that an all out effort should be made to realise it. The external gross body includes the various organs of perception and action, while the internal body refers to the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect and the various vital winds. The external means to pursue that Tattwa refer to the

harnessing of the external gross body with its various organs to devote its energy and efforts towards self-realisation and pursuance of noble goals instead of allowing them to indulge in self-gratification, in enjoying the sensual pleasures and comforts of the sense objects of the material world. It entails doing all noble things that can be done with the help of the body and which are conducive to spiritual upliftment of the creature. Some of these, inter alia, are the observance of various religious duties such as performance of sacrifices, giving of charity, observing the various sacraments, studying of the scriptures and following their tenets in daily life, doing the various meditative exercises, observing righteous codes of conduct, endeavouring to exercise control over the various organs and diverting their efforts towards spiritual upliftment of the creature instead of allowing them to be recklessly following their instincts and indulging in the enjoyment of the sense objects of the world, doing Tapa and Yoga etc.

Similarly, the internal mind and the intellect should be focused on the 'truth' instead of being deluded by the false charm of the external world and remaining restless. The mind-intellect complex should be focusing on the truthful illumination emanating from the bosom due to the presence of the consciousness instead of getting misled and tempted by the false dazzle and the lure of material enjoyment emanating from the world of delusions, which in turn leads to hallucinations that would make the helpless creature fall in a pit of ignorance in the long run just like the light of a lamp attracts an insect towards itself only to burn it in its flame. The charms proffered by the deluding world are artificial, for these charms are inherently perishable and decayable by their nature. They lead to denigrating the creature and cause his spiritual downfall, while the charm which is presented by the illumination of the pure thing called the Atma present in the bosom is permanent and it leads to the spiritual upliftment of the creature.

While attempt is being made to control and harness the body and direct all its energy and efforts towards realisation of the truthful 'self' which is pure consciousness called the Atma, equal attention ought to be made to the external as well as the internal body (i.e. the gross and subtle bodies). A coordinated and unified action will give greater success in any endeavour, while piecemeal and disjointed effort done haphazardly in an impulsive manner would be counter-productive and ruinous for the creature.]

4. This whole world, both the visible and the invisible, dissolves and vanishes in that halo of divine light that is subtle and all-pervading. [That is, once the spiritual aspirant and seeker of the Truth sees that light, its brilliant splendour is so great that it eliminates the illusive darkness of ignorance which had created the false impression that there is something called the world that exists, and that this world is real. This ignorance-induced darkness creating illusions of a ghostly world vanishes as soon as the light of realisation of the actual truth dawns on the mental horizon of the seeker.]

That state of existence is beyond the limiting constraints and definitions of 'Naad'¹, 'Bindu'² and 'Kala'³. That supreme entity which is realised in that state is both Saguna (having a form and attributes) as well as Nirguna (not having any form and attributes)⁴.

An aspirant/seeker who realises this or understands the import of this statement, or who realises such a truthful entity, or such a truthful existence, is indeed liberated and delivered from the fetters that had been shackling him to this gross and perishable body as well as their sense objects and the materialistic world of artificiality and delusions (4).

[Note—¹The *Naad* is the ethereal background sound of creation caused by subtle vibrations in cosmic ether; said to be the first sign of creation and the closest approach to the supreme transcendental Being; represented by the word OM.

²The word *Bindu* means a dot or a fine point; here it refers to the center that generates this Naad. There is an entire Upanishad called the 'Naad Bindu' belonging to the Rig Veda tradition which explains this concept in elaborately detail.

³The word *Kala* (pronounced as "Kalaa") has many connotations. It inter alia means shape, form, especial qualities, art, craft, skills, expertise, attributes etc.; a division, portion, phase or degree; any kind of discharge; brilliance, magnificence and grandeur; fraud, deceit and trick; maverick and supernatural powers. It also refers to—(a) the sixteenth part of the moon's diameter/disc, or one of the various phases of the moon; (b) the twelfth part of the sun's diameter/disc; (c) the division of time equivalent to about eight seconds; (d) one degree out of the three hundred and sixty degrees. So when these three terms, Naad, Bindu and 'Kala', are applied to that supreme Truth, it implies that the latter is so grand, so majestic, so magnificent, so stupendous that it transcends the definitions or parameters set by any particular word. That Truth is beyond their reach and dimension; the various connotations of the word cannot either be applied to that Truth nor can they define it in its entirety in any way. In the symbol of Brahm which is pronounced as 'OM', these three Naad, Bindu and Kalaa appear as a crescent moon or a shallow bowl with a dot at the center placed on the top of the symbol for OM. This Naad is like a big trough and represents the cosmic bowl or crucible in which the primary cosmic gel was placed to initiate the process of creation. The Bindu appears to indicate the pin-point source of heat, radiation or any other activating source placed just above this crucible to inject sufficient energy in to the primary fluid and activate it. It acts like a source of energy directed at the crucible (Naad) to set off the chain reaction that would ultimately culminate in the creation of this world. The Kalaa which refers to the various phases of the moon would indicate the different stages through which the entire process passed. But even as the parents of a child do not undergo any apparent change while the embryo develops in the mother's womb, the Supreme Being remained the same all the while the creation developed and unfolded in the cosmic womb represented by Mother Nature. Refer also to Subalo-panishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 6, verse no. 6.

⁴A person perceives that stupendous Truth, also known as the supreme Brahm, in the way that suits him best, that appeals to his mental bearing and perception of what the Supreme Being is or what the supreme Truth is like. There are a number of schools of thought, and their followers witness the supreme divinity in different forms. For example, the followers of school of philosophy that believes in manifested divinity as various incarnations of different denominations visualise that supreme entity that is essentially one and immutable whole in the form of their honoured deity. This is called the 'Saguna' Brahm because it has certain attributes and a form. Those who believe in the principle of duality, see him as Parmatma, the Supreme Being, whereas the followers of non-duality see it as the un-manifested Brahm who has no attributes. Similarly, the followers of Sankhya philosophy see it as Purush, while those who believe in Atma see it as pure consciousness state of enlightenment. Yogis/ascetics see it a fount of light and those who believe in the philosophy propounded by the Vedas see it as a manifestation of OM or Pranav. Those who follow the tenets of the Upanishads see it as the supreme transcendental Truth and the absolutely Reality that is beyond comprehension and words, that is at the very cause, at the very root of everything that exists, that in which everything that exists would ultimately collapse and merge, and that which is the object of all metaphysical research and analysis. This Brahm has no form and attributes, and hence it is called 'Nirguna Brahm'. With such broad scope, it is impossible to categorise that divine, supreme and transcendental entity as this or that.]

5. [The various Mandals or subtle divisions of the sky that are discernible by a Yogi while he meditates by the Shambhavi Mudra are described in this verse. This Mudra or sitting posture is briefly described in Brahman 1, section 3, verse nos. 4-5 as well as in Brahman 3, section 1, verse no. 1.]

The first division of the sky or space outside the body is called 'Agni Mandal' (or the sky or the Firmament which has the fire element present in it as its integral part; this is the sky just above the earth's surface because it is here one feels hot, and it is in the atmosphere of the earth that fire can be lit).

The second division beyond it is called 'Surya Mandal' (or the sky where the splendorous sun is located; the solar space of the entire solar system).

In the center of this (i.e. in the middle of the solar system) is the sky where the nectar-like (i.e. soothing and peace providing) moon is located. The sky around the moon is called the 'Chandra Mandal'.

Located in it is the glorious and magnificent abode of the eternal, immutable and truthful Brahman which is radiant, splendorous and brightly illuminated. It is called 'Brahm Mandal', and it has the dazzling illumination that resembles a bright streak of lightning.

These divisions of the sky are visible during the meditative posture known as Shambhavi Mudra (5).

[Note—During the meditation posture called Sambhavi Mudra, the ascetic observes these subtle skies and their changing colours. First he sees a raging fire, then it changes into a ball of fire resembling the sun, then this ball cools down to resemble the disc of the moon, and finally this metamorphoses into a flickering filament of intense dynamic energy with the intensity of an electric discharge.]

6. When that divine vision is seen by the Yogi (i.e. the ascetic who is doing mediation and endeavouring to experience the Truth), he perceives three symbolic forms or shapes—viz. the first is like the dark moon called 'Amaavasya', the next is like the shape of the moon on the first day of each half of the lunar cycle called the 'Pratipada', and the third is like the full moon called 'Purnamasi'.

These three visions are metaphors of the way the ascetic keeps his eyes open or closed—viz. the first Amaavasya is equivalent to his keeping his eyes closed during meditation; the second Pratipada symbolises his half open eyes; while the Purnamasi stands for his wide open eyes.

Therefore, the ascetic should practice meditation with fully open eyes because then he is able to visualise Brahman in its full glory (6).

[Note—The symbolism of the eyes and the various shapes of the moon are metaphors to emphasise the fact that one should see the truth with full attention, with wide open eyes, and with an open-ended mind because then he would be able to see and experience the reality as it exists instead of merely imagining it with closed eyes or understanding half of the actual truth with eyes that are half closed. In other words, one should have an open approach to spiritualism and be always alert and vigilant to enable one to see the truth whenever it reveals itself to him. The phrase 'open eye' is a metaphor for being wide awake, being receptive and alert, and witnessing each development as they appear in all their minutest detail. Nothing should escape the attention of a man who has a 'wide open eyes'. This situation is just the opposite of 'closed eye' when everything becomes dark. In other words, 'wide open eyes like that of the full moon' is a metaphor for enlightenment, wisdom and erudition, while 'eyes closed like the night of the dark moon'

signifies ignorance and delusions which are as overwhelming as the pitch darkness of the night when not even the hands are visible. The symbolism is markedly obvious here.]

7. The target or the point where the meditating ascetic should fix his attention with open eyes is the tip of the nostrils. In the beginning he would perceive a dense darkness in the region of the root of the tongue (i.e. the back of the mouth, the rear palate). By diligent practice, there appears a bright fount of light with a divine halo around it in the background of this darkness (much like the full moon against the dark sky of the night). This is indeed a revelation of the eternal, immanent and immutable supreme truthful Brahman (7).

8. In this way, when the mind and heart, called the Mana, is deeply engrossed and firmly established in a natural state of uninterrupted and pristine pure bliss and happiness, it is said to be the successful culmination of the Shambhavi Mudra. This eclectic state in which the Yogi establishes himself is also known as the 'Khechari Mudra' (8).

[Note—The *Khechari Mudra* has been described in detail in Yogchudamani Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition. In this Mudra or sitting posture of meditation, the tongue is inverted backwards and tucked in the upper palate, just inside the anterior part of the throat. It is generally believed that it greatly helps in focusing attention. It also helps to conquer hunger, sleep, greed, unconsciousness or numbness of the sense organs, and keeps the practitioner alert and focused, etc. The apparent difference between Khechari and Shambhavi Mudras is that in the latter the tongue is not tucked inside the mouth cavity, and is therefore easier to practice.]

9. With its constant practice, the mind becomes stabilized and consequential to it is the stabilizing of the intellect (9).

10. The signs of successful accomplishment of this Khechari Mudra are the following—in the beginning stars are visible, then a glittering source of light resembling diamonds is observed, followed by the glorious light resembling the full moon. This is followed by the appearance of a multi-coloured scintillating display of light emanating from nine types of precious stones, gems and jewels¹. This is followed by the vision of a dazzling fount of light that is as splendid and blinding as the mid-day sun.

Finally, there appears a halo that surrounds the tongue of flame or the burning wick of a candle (10).

[Note—¹The *nine precious stones, gems and jewels* are the following—pearl, emerald, quartz, zircon, diamond, coral, cat's eye, ruby and sapphire.]

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Brahman 2, Section 2

1. In the progression of appearances of different divine sources of light during the process of meditation, the next phase is when the divine light, which was hitherto witnessed externally at the tip of the nose (as in previous section no. 1, verse no. 10 above), is now witnessed internally inside the bosom of the aspirant Yogi. This internal light has five heads or flames, and is therefore called 'Panchabhimukh' (or the one with five heads).

Its radiance is like the white light emanating from 'Sphatik' or white crystal. Its source is like a 'Bindu' or a pin-point (representing the mind because the mind has the capacity to be focused like a laser beam on its subject) from which the 'Naad' originates (i.e. the cosmic vibrations that generated the first signs of life in the form of sound waves in ether appears to be emanating from the Bindu). Its majesty and glory symbolises the various 'Kalaas' (which literally means a phase or aspect of any given entity, alluding here to the ever changing forms of the flickering light having five colours in its flame; it also refers to the 16 divine virtues that are present as the basic defining qualities inherent in creation). These fluctuating and ever changing virtues are like the numerous 'Nakshatras' or stars sprinkled throughout the sky, resembling the countless twinkling sparklers radiating out from that divine source of light. Another resemblance is with the fire-worm or the glow-worm, the lighted lamp, the eye (which lights up the world for the creature), gold (which is self-glowing and radiant when hot), and like the nine precious stones or gems which glitter in their magnificence (as described in note to verse no. 10, section 1 of this Brahman above).

Verily, this light is a visible manifestation of 'Pranav' (or the cosmic all-pervading Brahm for which the word OM is used as an address; it is a synonym for the invisible and un-manifest supreme transcendental entity known as 'Brahm', or the pure consciousness of the universe which has revealed itself as a fount of splendorous light of the conscious Atma residing in the bosom of the Yogi) (1).

[Note—These 16 Kalaas, or divine virtues, have been described in detail in a note to verse no. 6 of Canto 6 of Subalo-panishad.]

2. [This verse briefly describes how 'Naad', the cosmic sound which pervades throughout the universe, can be heard by the mediating ascetic or Yogi.]

The aspirant Yogi should merge the two vital winds—the Pran and Apaana—and hold them together in his stomach or abdomen. This is called 'Kumbhak', or 'holding of the breath' aspect of wind control exercise in Yoga¹.

Then the sight should be firmly fixed and focused at the tip of the nose. The fingers of both the hands should be used (to close the opening of the nose, ears and mouth which enables the aspirant Yogi) to achieve success in going through the process of 'Shanmukhi Mudra'².

With successful practice of this posture, the aspirant is enabled to hear the ethereal cosmic sound called Pranav (or OM). This sound completely absorbs the attention of the Yogi³ (2).

[Note—¹The *Pran* is the most important vital wind in the body amongst the various winds that sustain life in the creature's body. It is synonymous with breath which is inhaled and then exhaled through the nostrils. This Pran is synonymous with life also because without it, life simply cannot exist. The *Apaana* wind is the wind which passes down the intestines, and extends right from the cavity of the mouth to the opening of the anus; it helps in ingestion of food, its digestion in the alimentary canal, and its excretion. Both the winds are equally important, for without Pran a person wouldn't be able to breathe and would suffocate to death, while without Apaana he wouldn't be able to digest food and excrete waste matters from the body. The Apaana wind becomes hot due to its passage in the body, especially the intestines, and it acts like heated air in a chimney that goes up.

According to the principles of Yoga, the exercise that helps to control the vital winds is called Pranayam. Essentially, it consists of three phases—viz. the inhalation of breath

called 'Purak' (literally meaning filling) when breath is drawn in, the holding of it inside the body called 'Kumbhak' (literally meaning to fill a pitcher), and its slowly exhalation through the nostrils called 'Rechak' (literally meaning cleansing or purging).

So, when the fresh oxygen-laden breath is held inside the body during the *Kumbhak* phase of Yoga, the tissues of the body get proper time to absorb the oxygen brought in by the Pran when it was inhaled. Meanwhile, the impure toxic gases created during the process of digestion of food inside the body are collected by the heated Apaana wind. They are brought to the upper part of the body, and they get mixed with the Pran wind while it is being held inside the abdomen/stomach during the Kumbhak phase. Basically, this phase is like holding air in a balloon before it is vented out through the nostrils during the Rechak phase. Refer also to Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/95-117.

²The *Shanmukhi Mudra* is done to control and harness the mind, to regulate the two vital winds etc. It helps to provide bliss by diverting the vital winds from either going out through the nostrils (Pran) or through the anus (Apana). Instead, these winds are trained to move up into the top of the head to enter the area called 'Brahm Randhra' which is a hair like slit in the skull. To practice this Mudra or posture of Yoga/meditation, the aspirant should sit in a Swastika posture, pull up the Apana wind (i.e. prevent it from escaping as flatus from the anus), slowly repeat the divine syllables of Pranava or OM, close the ears with the thumb, the eyes with the first fingers (the index finger), and the nose with the other fingers. The breath should also be simultaneously held as done during Kumbhak. This meditative posture should be continued as long as the aspirant feels the sensation of bliss. The mixed winds (i.e. the Pran and Apana) which have been trapped inside the body get heated while being held in Kumbhak phase. Being lighter than the earlier cool wind, the mixed wind now rises up into the head to enter the area on its top, called the Brahm Randhra. When this is achieved, the aspirant Yogi experiences weird sounds in his head, which are nothing but the cosmic Naad.

³That is, once this sound is heard, its vibrations have such an effect on the nerves of the brain, especially the mind, that the aspirant literally drowns in the ocean of cosmic sound waves emanating from the cosmic Naad called *Pranava* or OM so much so that he loses awareness of everything else, both his own self as well as the external world around him. He lives in a state of perpetual bliss and appears to be engulfed by waves of surging exhilaration just like a man who listens to enchanting music with ear-plugs is oblivious of the surrounding world. This ocean of sound drowns him. The pulsating waves of sound emanating from the Naad act like vibrators which caress and massage the nerves of the brain, resulting in their becoming calm, relaxed and quiet. Naad therefore also has a tranquilizing effect on the Yogi. This state of stupefaction and numbness of the senses, the sedative and intoxicating effect that is brought about on hearing this Naad is extremely subtle, sublime and divine in nature rather than the gross forms of numbness of the senses brought about by worldly sounds like listening to loud rock music, but this example would help one to grasp how the Yogi must feel when he hears that Naad.]

3. A person who practices these meditation exercises is not bound by the obligation to do other religious deeds and observe certain religious sacraments. Religious rituals and sacraments are traditionally done at the time of the sun rise or at sun set, but the sun representing the pure, illuminated and eternal consciousness, known as the 'Chidaditya'—or the Sun God called Aditya who is symbolically present inside the bosom of all the creatures as their consciousness—shines perpetually, i.e. it never rises or sets. Therefore, there is no need for a self-realised and enlightened person, who has realised this fact about the symbolic form of Sun God's presence in his very own bosom,

to bother about the daily offering of sacred rituals and observance of religious sacraments at every sun rise and sun set in the external world (3).

[Note—Since the light of pure consciousness is invariably present inside the very self of all the creatures, only those who are not aware of this spiritual fact spend their time and energy in offering prayers and oblations to the external form of that light represented by the celestial sun in the sky when they perform various rituals and sacraments every morning and evening. But for those who are awakened to the fact that the external sun does not have an eternal presence because it rises and sets on a daily basis as compared to the splendourous sun present in the subtle sky of their own heart as pure enlightened consciousness or in their mind-intellect as the light of their truthful knowledge, intelligence, insight, wisdom and erudition as well as the various skills and expertise that they possess that lightens up their inner self and their life in so many ways, then such self-realised persons do not feel the need to do or observe rituals for attaining access to something that is not eternal. They would rather pursue something that gives them steady and long term blessings.

When this philosophy is extended to their ordinary mundane lives, they do not think it mandatory to observe special formalities in order to attain their spiritual goals and provide for their welfare. They would prefer to treat their entire life as one big religious ritual rather than limiting their noble goal of spiritual enhancement to the performance of specific auspicious and righteous deeds. In other words, they are freed from the necessity of doing specific auspicious, righteous and noble deeds, for all the deeds done by them become exemplary examples of righteousness and auspiciousness. Their holiness and piousness radiates out from them and shines perpetually upon the world like the sunlight that lights up the world around it, with the only difference that the sunlight lasts only till the time the celestial sun is in the sky and it is not covered by the blanket of clouds, whereas the divine light of holiness and spirituality emanating from self-realised souls is perpetual and even lasts after they have left their mortal bodies.]

4. When the ‘Shabda’, or words, fall silent (i.e. when there is utter silence and nothing to speak about; or when a situation arises which words cannot describe), and when ‘Kaal’, or time and circumstance, do not matter or exist, then a person goes beyond the purview of worldly expectations and regulations imposed by the cycle of day and night (such as the convention of doing work during the day thereby necessitating the use of words, and to sleep during the night when no talking is done).

When true self-realisation dawned upon him, he goes beyond the necessity of observing formalities; this state instills a sense of indifference in him; he becomes aloof to all worldly considerations and the need to adhere to conventions. This state of immunity from all worldly distractions is called ‘Unmanya’. [It is a state of being totally engrossed and submerged in hearing of the cosmic Naad as described in verse no. 2 above in an endless, unbroken, continuous stream of cosmic vibrations resonating in the aspirant’s mind that makes it numbed or immune to the reception of all external stimuli from this world that would otherwise cause continuous restlessness, agitations and distractions for him and hinder his desire for eternal bliss and peace.]

When this state of complete detachment, of total aloofness and absolute indifference towards this world becomes ripe and a natural affair with the self-realised person, then he becomes one with Brahm. He also resembles one who has no interest in the mundane affairs of the material world, and such persons are called ‘Amanask’, or one whose mind and heart have lost all interests in the attractions offered by the world, and

consequentially has obtained perpetual bliss, peace and tranquility. [Refer Brahman 3, section 1, verse no. 1 also.] (4).

5. [In this verse, symbolism and metaphors are used to describe the worship of the supreme formless and attributeless Brahm in a ritualistic form of worship that is usually adopted to worship deities with forms and attributes. The idea is to draw attention towards the hidden meaning behind formal ritualistic patterns adopted for worship of any deity, and inculcate awareness in people who do formal rituals in a mechanical way without the requisite wisdom and understanding of their spiritual and metaphysical import. Without knowledge, any exercise will become meaningless, and with proper understanding that same exercise not only gives satisfaction of intellectual fulfillment but also proves more beneficial for the aspirant, for then he would be able not only to fine tune them according to his specific needs but also fine tune himself if he finds any shortcomings in himself. This verse tells the worshipper that the various physical rituals performed during formal forms of offering of worship process can be transformed to a higher and more evolved and sublime form of worship of the primary source of all divinity if one just has the inclination, the desire, the mental setup, the caliber, the knowledge, the wisdom and the guidance to do so. This verse establishes a link between those who prescribe to the philosophy of duality, i.e. who believe in incarnations, and those who do not prescribe to that philosophy and believe only on the pure non-dual Atma which is one and universal, and which does not need any formal forms of worship or rituals for its realisation.]

To be in a state of being without any kind of worries and cares is tantamount to 'his' (Brahm's) Dhyān (or constantly remembering and concentrating one's mind upon the chosen deity).

[This is because when one focuses one's mind upon the supreme Brahm, the mind is freed from getting bogged down or entangled in worldly worries and cares that confound the man.]

To remain non-involved and non-committal in deeds and thereby eliminating their influences upon the Atma and the self is like the symbolic invocation of the deity and formally inviting the Lord at the time of formal forms of worship.

[This implies that one does not allow himself to get emotionally involved in any deed, but do them with dispassion and selfless attitude as a sacred duty offered to the Lord or the chosen deity of the aspirant. This would entail a natural indifference to the results of those deeds, which would then not affect the creature at the mental level. This would not only give peace of mind but ensure that the vicious chain of deeds, their results and their consequences, newer deeds done as a spin off from the previous deed and its consequences, and so on and so forth, is broken for good. This liberates the creature from the cycle of birth and death, because basically birth is due to the necessity to undergo punishment or to enjoy the results of the deeds done in the previous life, and death is when the time of this punishment and enjoyment is over. But it is not this easy formula, because during the present life, the creature does newer deeds, and these have their own set of consequences which would necessitate a new birth. So how is this cycle broken or stopped? It is very simple—non-involvement in doing deeds in this life, so that when the past stock is exhausted, and when no new stock is accumulated then there would be no need to take a new birth. But now the question arises—how to remain uninvolved in deeds while one lives in this world with a gross body that cannot remain quiet and has a natural habit of always doing something or the other? The answer is no mental

attachment in deeds; the enlightened view that the deed is being done by the body which is not the truthful identity of the person's self, which however is the Atma, the pure conscious self. This very basic understanding relieves the person from the bondage of deeds. The emphasis is on mental non-involvement, and not on actual physical non-performance of deeds, for if one has a body then it is impossible not to do anything at all with the body if one has to lead a normal life in this world. This form of existence is called 'Jivan Mukti' which is so much lauded by the scriptures. It is the form of liberation that forms the framework of final liberation and deliverance at the time of discarding of the body at the time of death, when the aspirant achieves the 'Videha Mukti' or the liberation and deliverance without the limitations and encumbrance imposed upon the Atma by the physical body.]

Certainty of knowledge (i.e. a knowledge without any doubts and confusions), being firm about its authenticity and veracity, is like a seat on which the patron deity is reverentially seated after it is welcome.

[That is, to have firmness of conviction and steadfastness of beliefs are the foundations upon which the entire edifice of spiritual progress is based. If one has doubts then it creates more restlessness and uncertainties than anything else, and this creates hindrance in spiritual progress. So it is better to first get oneself firmly convinced that what one is doing is the correct path, and then step upon that path spiritedly with whole heartedness, not demurring and doubting about its truthfulness and authenticity midway, for it would leave the aspirant no where to go, and make him like a rudderless ship that has been left adrift to toss aimlessly in the ferocious ocean.]

To remain perpetually in a state of indifference and aloofness, to be constantly dispassionate and detached, is like the symbolic washing and worshipping of the holy feet of the deity.

[This is because remaining detached from this world as well as the body helps the aspirant to cleanse his inner self where the supreme Lord resides as his pure consciousness, or as the Brahm manifested as his Atma, from all the impurities such as the various Vasanas (worldly passions, lusts, yearnings, greed etc.) and Virttis (inherent inclinations, temperaments, habits, tendencies etc.), and other negative traits that are very natural to any creature who has a body and who interacts with the world, such as the qualities of having Ahankar (pride, ego and their attendant arrogance, haughtiness and hypocrisy), Krodh (anger), Kaam (desires and lusts), Lobha (greed, rapacity), Moha (attachments, attractions, ignorance, delusions) etc. Therefore, this symbolic cleansing of the holy feet of the Lord is done by eliminating all forms of dirt symbolised by worldly attachments and negative traits that are inherent in the creature. This internal cleansing is more significant than external washing of the body.]

Similarly, constant, persistent and consistent non-attachment of the mind with anything is akin to offering oblations to the deity. Remaining always cheerful and in a perpetual state of blissfulness is like bathing the deity.

To see the same Brahm everywhere is like offering of perfume and other scented herbs to the deity.

[This holistic knowledge that the same holy and divine entity prevails everywhere in the creation is like the spread of the refreshing and invigorating scent of divine knowledge which acts as the pleasant perfume that helps to overcome all stench and bad odours represented by the presence of numerous beliefs and faiths, countless cults and paths prescribed for salvation and emancipation, etc. that prevail in this world which is deluded and not certain of its own true self. All these misleading notions are demeaning and degrading for the soul of the aspirant. The diversity of philosophies and spiritual paths only create confusions for the spiritual aspirant instead of showing him a certain

way to liberation and deliverance. Each philosophy and school of thought tries to ridicule the other and asserts that it is the best, thereby throwing the follower in whirlpool of doubts and perplexities. On the other hand, the view enumerated in this verse as a whole inculcates the virtues of equanimity and non-duality in the person, and he begins to see the entire world with the eye of equality, compassion and magnanimity because he sees his Lord everywhere in all spheres of life. This spreads the perfume of brotherhood and love in all directions.]

To be able to have this holistic ‘view’ of the deity, to be able to have the ‘vision’ of Brahm as a fount of divine light while meditating, to be able to fix one’s ‘sight’ on the only one and the only truth of creation known as Brahm—this is like the offering of rice grains at the time of worship of the invoked deity.

The realisation of the ‘self’ as the pure consciousness is like the flower that is offered to the deity at the time of worship.

[The flower is like the visible sign of a reward or great respect that is given to anyone as an honour or praise for him for achieving exemplary success in any endeavour. The success here is self realisation of the consciousness. The person thanks the Lord to make it happen by offering him flowers symbolised by his own self.]

To treat this eternal consciousness as the divine sacrificial fire is like the offering of lighted incense sticks (*the clibanum*) to the worshipped deity. To realise that the pure consciousness is like the divine Sun called Aditya (the Sun God) is like the lighted lamp.

[This metaphor is very obvious. The sun lights the entire realm; the consciousness present inside the aspirant also lights up his inner self in a similar manner. The purpose of the lamp is to illuminate the worship altar, and similarly the sun is useful because it gives light to the world. So the realisation that the symbolic light of consciousness is burning in the heart of an aspirant gives him the ‘light’ of wisdom, truthful knowledge and enlightenment that removes the darkness of delusions and ignorance from the realm of his mind and intellect.]

To visualise that one has an uninterrupted access to the pitcher of Amrit, or the elixir of beatitude and felicity stored in the moon, which is a metaphoric way of saying that one has gained access to the perpetual bliss obtained by self-realisation, is like the offering of sweets to the deity at the time of formal worship.

[The simile between the sweet offered to the deity and the Amrit is very obvious once again. The bliss that a Yogi attains during meditation that culminates in Samadhi gives him immense happiness and satisfaction, and since the supreme Brahm, the Lord, resides in his bosom, when he feels happy that Lord also feels satisfied.]

To be steady and unwavering in one’s spiritual path (progress) is akin to doing circumambulation or circumnavigation of the worship altar, the sacrifice place and the deity. The eclectic notion of ‘So-A-Ham’, i.e. ‘that is me’ (or the supreme truth is me), is tantamount to bowing and offering obeisance to the worshipped deity.

[The self realised ascetic will never be haughty and arrogant when he makes this statement which is one the greatest truths propounded by the scriptures. When he says that he is that Supreme Being personified, he is actually only affirming that truth, and not boasting about himself. He is just stating that he has finally realised the truthful form of his own self. After all, the ultimate form of emancipation and salvation is when no distinction remains between the individual creature and the source from where the creature came from, i.e. the merger of the individual Atma of the creature with the supreme Atma of the creation, which is Brahm.]

Silence is like offering of prayers and chanting of hymns.

[This is a very important observance—the Lord is well versed in scriptures and the languages. Loud incantations are not at all needed to please the supreme Lord. He understands the language of the heart and what goes on in the mind even without telling him. Silent prayers are the best forms of prayer and means of communication with the Lord. No one needs to tell him what he already knows. The real prayer comes from the heart and not as words learnt by rote; such words are robbed of their true emotional and spiritual value. It is not possible to cheat the supreme Lord by repeating something written by someone else when we would rather like to say something different to him. If we were to treat the Lord like a mother, then any mother would better understand the meaning of her child's cry than the words of the scriptures. The same thing applies here. The glory and majesty of the Lord cannot be captured in words; in fact that would be tantamount to showing a lamp to the sun. So those who are wise prefer to keep quiet instead of making a fool out of themselves by repeating words of someone else as prayers because the supreme One who lives in the heart understands the 'words of silence' better than meaningless words which have no pith or substance in them, and which are repeated like a parrot just for the sake of saying.]

Being contented and satisfied, feeling fulfilled, is like giving rest to the deity after concluding the ritual of formal worship and dispersing the congregation that has assembled for such worship.

[This is because when one is fully satisfied he would not seek anything from anyone, even from the Gods. When all desires are annihilated and when a person feels fully contented and fulfilled, he would not go to others for his needs. It is metaphoric way of saying that the assembly has been dispersed and the deity given rest. It is usually observed that people perform elaborate religious ceremonies to propitiate Gods with one or the other wish which they like to be fulfilled. When they don't have any need or unfulfilled desire, they need not perform such elaborate exercises. So the symbolism is very clear here also.]

A person who knows this is really deemed to be knowledgeable about the true meaning of worship (and therefore he becomes one as exalted as the supreme Brahman himself because he would have realised that the deity he is worshipping is silently residing in his own 'self') (5).

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Brahman 2, Section 3

1. In this manner, when the triad of knowledge (based on the triumvirate of the object sought to be known, the process of knowing it, and the person who seeks that knowledge or the one who knows it) is done away with, i.e. when this distinction is removed or dispelled, then that state is achieved which resembles the calm and pacific ocean that has no heaving waves in it, or it is like the lamp burning at a place where there is no wind blowing to disturb the steadiness of its flame. In this exalted and stable state, a person has no feelings, emotions and sentiments of any kind. This state is called the 'Kaivalya', or the unique state of existence which is one of its own kind, and that is self-illuminated and radiant (1).

[Note—The word Kaivalya means the only one. In this state of existence, there is no sense of duality and its attendant confusions and perplexities about Brahman and the creature. The knowledge which enables this realisation to dawn in the intellect of the creature is attained by the study of the scriptures or hearing about it from a wise teacher

or by the means of contemplation and meditation etc. But once this fact is ascertained by acquisition of truthful knowledge, then the sense of duality vanishes and the realised person sees the same supreme Brahm prevailing everywhere in the creation in a uniform and universal manner. Then he is not buffeted by numerous theories and speculative conjectures, and he remains steady in his conviction like a flame of the lamp that remains steady in the absence of wind. The comparison with the lamp is important because this awareness of the same Brahm everywhere implies that for such a person who has got this realisation there is light of truthfulness and the illumination created by its glorious radiance shining everywhere, thereby removing the darkness of ignorance and delusions. When darkness is removed, what removes is the brightness of self-realisation. That is why the Kaivalya state is described as having an inherent illumination of realisation in it; it is an inborn and integral glow of a divine halo and a radiant light which is a metaphor for realisation and truthful knowledge.

Further, this realisation relates to Brahm who is self illuminated and radiant as well as to the fact that that Brahm and the Atma, which is pure enlightened consciousness, are the same entity. Therefore, both the Atma and the Brahm are self-illuminated. Whereas the Atma has a microcosmic form as the one that lives in the individual creature's bosom, it is at the same time prevalent in the entire creation as the conscious factor that drives it, and that consciousness is known as Parmatma or literally the supreme Atma. Both are essentially the same—i.e. they are Kaivalya. A wise person who is established in this belief is also the one of his kind or Kaivalya. For him, nothing else but the Truth prevails, and of course Truth can only be one, or Kaivalya.]

2. A person who remains aware or conscious of his true form and pure nature (as the one who is pure enlightened consciousness personified; as the Atma which is in turn indistinguishable and inseparable from the supreme Brahm) at all times, during his waking as well as the sleeping states of existence (i.e. throughout his life, day and night, whether he is actively involved in doing worldly deeds with his body or he is not doing anything at all, i.e. in every stage and walk of life), is indeed called a 'Brahm Vid', i.e. a person who is well versed in the knowledge pertaining to the essential truth of Brahm; a person who really is truthfully aware of what Brahm is; who is wise and erudite enough to be enlightened about the essential doctrines, the basic tenets, the great maxims and axioms of the scriptures that endeavour to define Brahm in a subtle and succinct manner. [It must be remembered that it is foolhardy to even attempt to define or describe Brahm in its entirety.] (2).

3. Although the mind-intellect complex is relegated to the background and rendered inconsequential because it has no role to play in both the deep sleep state of existence called 'Sushupta' as well as in the trance-like state of consciousness called 'Samadhi', the two stages of Sushupta (deep sleep) and Samadhi (trance-like state) are vastly different from one another though they apparently seem to be alike because of the defunct mind-intellect complex in both the cases.

During the Sushupta state of existence, the mind dissolves in ignorance or is concealed in a veil of ignorance, as a result of which there is no scope of attaining 'Mukti', or liberation and deliverance from the bondage of ignorance (3).

[Note—During the 'deep sleep state of existence of consciousness', which is the third state in which the consciousness exists, the mind becomes defunct and ceases to have any role. That is, a man does not see any dream nor remembers anything happening around

him in the outside world while he was lying asleep in a virtual 'un-consciousness' state of existence simply because the mind which perceives such perceptions is not functioning.

The word 'ignorance' refers to (a) the unawareness of the bliss that is obtained at the culmination of Samadhi, and also (b) to the unawareness of what is happening in the physical world of the waking state of consciousness as well as the imaginary world of the dreaming state. In fact, this Sushupta stage can be compared to the proverbial 'lull before the storm'. The creature has two options now—either to step back into the world of dreams and then to the world of wakefulness, or progress further ahead to the next step of Samadhi.

Since the mind is the instrument that receives and stores information from the outside world in its memory, when it ceases to function the man is not able to experience anything about the external world or even dream of anything. Therefore the Atma, which is the truthful identity of the man and the actual authority that feels and experiences anything, remains ignorant of what is happening in the physical external world while the man sleeps, and at the same time since it is not even dreaming it remains oblivious of what is happening in the imaginary world of dreams that the active mind conjures up during the dreaming state of existence.

Hence, a sleeping man is ignorant of everything—whether that pertains to the world of waking state or the world of dreams. The Atma is at peace with itself; it is freed from the influences of the mind as well as the various entrapments caused by the body and its sense organs. But this freedom is transient and temporary, for as soon as he wakes up, the entire setup snaps back to life and the mind becomes active, thereby enabling the man to witness and experience the happenings of the world, and be affected by them. Thus the man no longer remains free from the fetters that had robbed him of his peace and tranquility. Similarly during dreams, the man is able to witness and experience what is happening in that world of dreams. Though that world is fictional, yet he is very much involved in it and affected by what he sees in his dreams as is evident when he gets frightened by nightmares, or recollects pleasant dreams while he is awake, especially if the physical world in which he lives is not as pleasant as the one he sees in his dreams.

So for all practical purposes, the Atma is peaceful only till the time it sleeps soundly, but this is a temporary phase because as soon as the man wakes up, the awareness of the world with all its problems snatches his Atma's peace and bliss that it had been enjoying earlier during sleep. In short, the man is not permanently freed from the world of worries and sorrows, and is therefore not free and liberated in the true sense of the word. While he is awake, his mind is pulling him towards this world of material comforts and pleasures. When he is dreaming, the mind takes him on a trajectory of fancy in which he can do things that were not possible for him during the waking state. Both the worlds are entangling for him, pulling him in opposite directions, and the freedom from them that he finds during deep sleep or Sushupta is only temporary.]

4. During the Samadhi state of existence, all the faults and flaws categorised as 'Tama' (i.e. the meanest qualities in a man) are exhausted or annihilated. These Tama qualities form a veil around the pure consciousness or Atma in the form of various Vrittis (inherent tendencies and temperaments of the creature that define his character and behavioural pattern in this world). During the state of Samadhi, the conscious Atma becomes a mere witness of what is happening around it without getting emotionally involved in anything. As a result of this, these Vrittis have no effect on the Atma. During this state, the mind is subjugated because it is focused on the pure self instead of in the world and its accompanying trauma. As is well known and is a well established doctrine of the Upanishads that 'the delusory world is a creation of the mind, and is based on the

ignorance of the truth or reality', so when the mind is pulled away from the world, which however is its own creation, and instead concentrated elsewhere, in this case in the pure self, then it would not have the scope to create more mischief. As a result, all delusions are eliminated, and stability, accompanied by peace and bliss, become dominant features (4).

[Note--With all delusions and ignorance exhausted, and with their progenitor the mind firmly vanquished, the man is able to attain truthful Mukti. 'Mukti' refers to true liberation of the creature from the bondage of ignorance, and deliverance from its shackling effects. If ignorance persists, then merely annihilation of the mind for a short while, or mere non-functioning of the mind temporarily, does not provide Mukti. In the case of Samadhi, the mind is not functioning even during the waking state, so the liberation from all the delusions created by it is permanent. This is Mukti

In verse no. 3, it has been shown how the state of the mind changes from one state to another. In the state of Samadhi, this does not happen because during this state the man remains perpetually engrossed in the awareness of his 'pure self' and enjoys the accompanying bliss that comes with self-realisation even during his waking state when he appears to be doing his normal work of the world while he is actually mentally and emotionally aloof, disinterested and detached from them. His mind is not hooked to the world but constantly, consistently and persistently focused on his inner self. As a result, the mind does not respond to stimuli from the external material world, and therefore it does not store any information for the sub-conscious to dream of even during the dreaming state of existence. There is a uniform state of existence marked by bliss, and detachment and non-involvement of the Atma in anything related to the mundane world.

That is why Mukti is possible during the state of Samadhi but not during the state of Sushupta.]

5. Now, since Samadhi creates oneness of the pure consciousness or Atma with the supreme Truth which is the ultimate Reality, or when the individual creature realises the ultimate Truth of the entire existence, the sense of duality is obliterated for good. As a result, even though the aspirant wakes up into this world and appears to be doing his duties in a normal way, the profundity of the ultimate Truth that he has realised—the fact that what is seen is this external world is an illusory creation of the mind, that the world exists as long as the mind thinks it to be there, and that the essential operating truthful factor in the whole creation is not the gross physical frame of the world as it is seen but the subtle consciousness that is not seen and which is known as the Atma at the micro level and Brahm at the macro level—keeps him virtually indifferent and aloof from this deluding world. Since he has tasted the ambrosia of truthful and eternal bliss while he was in the state of Samadhi, it becomes his main pursuit, for the happiness that this artificial world appears to provide him, the comforts and pleasures that the sense objects give him are all illusive, impermanent and deluding for him; they are artificial, fictitious and transient. He has realised this fact, so he, being wise and erudite as well as enlightened about the actual Truth and aware of the Reality, abhors this falsehood and tries to keep a safe distance from it by not getting involved in it and falling in its trap.

Anyone who has understood the essential doctrines that pertain to Brahm realisation does not fall in the trap of falsehood, and such a person becomes one like Brahm; he becomes as exalted and honourable as Brahm; he becomes indistinguishable and inseparable from Brahm (5).

6. A person whose different 'Sankalps' (i.e. various volitions, determinations, ambitions, desires, vows and resolves) have been totally and completely annihilated or exhausted or overcome or eliminated or brought under control, only such a person can have access to 'Mukti', or liberation and deliverance (from ignorance, from the various delusions, from this mundane and artificial world of various illusions and entrapments).

Such a sincere seeker of Mukti becomes totally dispassionate and detached from all kinds of things that are trapping by nature, things that are transient, mortal, artificial and deluding, thereby completely renouncing all his mental, intellectual, emotional and sentimental attachments or dealings with them, and instead of them focusing his attention on the supreme Parmatma (as he is the only truthful Authority that is the provider of eternity and bliss as well as liberation and deliverance to the soul of the seeker from the trap into which it finds itself in), he indeed becomes 'Mukta' (i.e. such a wise and enlightened person indeed attains liberation and deliverance from all kinds of shackles that tie an ordinary creature who is not wise and enlightened enough) (6).

[Note--An enlightened person who has realised the truth about the eternal source of bliss, who has realised the falsehood of this world and the truthfulness of the Atma and its parent Parmatma is no more attracted to this world of artificiality and delusions. He sees the world as hollow and without any pith and substance. He realises that getting involved in the world of material sense objects is only a source of endless sufferings and sorrows, and they would ensnare him in their clutches from which it is very difficult to tear one self free. This trap creates slavery for the man instead of giving him peace and tranquility. So to break free from this shackle created by ignorance about the reality and truth is equivalent to attaining Mukti, or liberation and deliverance of the soul from delusions and ignorance.]

7. Hence it is repeatedly emphasised that a person can attain the exalted state of being 'Jivan Mukta' (i.e. liberated and delivered from worldly shackles created by delusions and ignorance even while he is alive and interacts with this world) if he avoids getting bogged down, confused and perplexed in the maze created by so many countless aspects of metaphysics and theology—such as what is knowledge and what is the object of that knowledge, what are the various meditative theories and techniques and what are the objects (benefits, rewards) of those meditative practices, in debating what to see or observe or pursue or follow and what not to, what is the truthfulness and fact of what is seen and what is not seen, what is gross and what is subtle, or engaging endlessly in such debates, logics and arguments¹. This is verily the knowledge contained herein, and a person who has this knowledge is indeed regarded as knowledgeable and erudite (7).

[Note--¹That is, it is useless and in vain to waste one's time and energy by allowing one self to be confused and perplexed willingly by getting trapped in the bog of uncertainty and doubts created by such endless debates and discussions concerning various aspects of scriptures and metaphysics. The Truth (Brahm and Atma; pure enlightened consciousness) has to be realised first hand by a person in order to be convinced about its authenticity and irrefutability, and mere debates and discussions about it are not conducive to sufficiently convince him about its veracity so as to make him a staunch follower of that Truth. On the contrary, they would cause more perplexities and confusions about the Truth and how to reach it or realise it than removing them.]

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Brahman 2, Section 4

1. A creature has five states of existence of its consciousness—viz. the waking state called Jagrat, the dreaming state called Swapna, the deep sleep state called Sushupta, the blissful state called Turiya, and the trans Turiya state called Turiyatit marked by the highest order of beatitude and felicity (1).

2. Out of these five planes of a creature's existence, it is in the Jagrat state that a creature gets involved in doing various deeds, and aspires to do such good, righteous and noble deeds that would not only help him to overcome the fear of getting into hell due to the sinful effects of his past deeds but also help him to attain heaven. That is, it is only during the waking state that a man can use his body and its sense organs to do deeds, and these deeds decide whether he would be condemned to hell as a metaphor for his punishment, or destined for heaven where there is perpetual bliss and happiness as a reward for his righteousness and goodness. Therefore, it is only when one has any desire, even a holy and auspicious one such as to achieve heaven by doing good deeds, that he endeavours to do various deeds in order to accomplish success in fulfilling those desires. Getting 'involved in doing any deed whatsoever' that is conducive to the fulfillment of any desire, and which helps the aspirant to achieve success in it, is nevertheless deemed to be getting entangled in the web of deeds and their effects—good effects such as going to heaven, or bad effects such as going to hell (2).

[Note—This verse emphasises the point that deeds are so entrapping by their inherent nature that once a creature puts his leg in this bog, it is bound to be sucked in it; once he allows himself to come in contact with the deeds, they would invariably clasp him in a firm grip. Whether the deeds themselves are auspicious or not, whether the intention of doing them is good or otherwise, but it is impossible for a creature to remain unaffected by the basic nature of the deeds to trap and clasp everyone who comes within their reach in a vice-like grip.]

3. On the other hand, when the same creature accepts the philosophy of renunciation from deeds, he finds freedom from birth which is a result of the affects of deeds and their consequences, and the resultant bondage to this world. When he has this aspiration of finding the ultimate freedom, called Mukti, from all types of shackles pertaining to this body and the world, he would accept the path of renunciation and proceed towards his goal of emancipation and salvation of his self (3).

[Note—When a creature has any kind of hope or expectation, such as the desire to enjoy the comforts and pleasures of heaven, he would do compatible deeds that would help him achieve his goals. The creature can enjoy heaven or suffer in hell only if he has a body and he has the feeling or notion that he is enjoying or suffering. The very desire that 'I wish to go to heaven' or that 'I wish not to go to hell' necessitates the presence and involvement of a body because no one can enjoy heaven or suffer in hell if he does not have a body for these notions or feelings are limited to the gross body and its various organs. The pure consciousness neither suffers from pain of hell nor exults in the pleasures of heaven.

The true identity of a creature is his Atma and not the physical gross body. Therefore it is the Atma which is deemed to be involved in doing any deed when it is said that the creature is doing anything. So, when the wise and enlightened creatures realises that his true 'self' called the Atma is being unnecessarily dragged into the notion of doing deeds

whereas in fact it is the body which is actually doing the various deeds, and that the body is not his true identity but merely a vehicle used by his Atma for its journey in this world, a journey that has been imposed upon it as a punishment or reward of its past deeds and their cumulative affects, he withdraws himself, i.e. he distances his Atma from getting involved in any deed. This is because he has known the negative effects of this erroneous conception of the body's deeds as being treated as the deed done by the creature, and that doing auspicious and good deeds can give him freedom from his agonies—this is the very mistake that the creature had made in his previous life when he had thought that he can attain liberation by doing good deeds. So, the creature gets himself involved in doing deeds. But these deeds are so cunning that they silently and secretly ignite a desire in him to see and enjoy the rewards that accrue with good deeds. Since the body continued to do deeds till its last moment, obviously some remnants of rewards due to the creature remained pending before he died. Therefore he has to take a new birth to give effect to the rewards that were due to him but could not be awarded because of the intervention of death. The net result is that instead of getting freedom from the very cycle of birth and death that he had desired in the first place, the creature remained trapped in it. So a wise man would not like to repeat that mistake again; he would not like to get involved in anything that would push him into another round of birth and death. He would rather not get involved in doing any deed whatsoever, good or bad.

But since he has got a body, he must do something, for the body cannot remain idle by nature. The answer to this perplexing dilemma is to do deeds with total dispassion, detachment, non-involvement and with a sense of renunciation. When there is renunciation, there is no sense of belonging and attachment, no hopes and expectations, and therefore there is no question of accumulation of after affects of deeds simply because the creature does not 'actually do' anything. The actions become superficial and they do not involve the mind and the intellect and the heart; only the body is involved. And since the body is not the 'true self', there is therefore no question of the 'true self' of having to bear the consequences of the deed. This is called the true form of 'Mukti' or liberation.

On the other hand, if the creature has any hope or expectation from any deed, or if a deed is done with an expectation of any reward, such as acquiring heaven, then it would not be truthfully liberating; it would rather be entangling for the creature though he might think otherwise in his foolishness. All deeds force the Atma to assume a body because every deed has a result, and acquisition of a body automatically entails a cycle of birth and subsequent death. Obviously, this is not the true meaning of liberation and deliverance.]

4. Now, such a seeker needs guidance to follow the prescribed path. So he takes the shelter (advise, help, guidance and refuge) of a wise and enlightened Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide), and then follows the righteous path determined for his liberation and deliverance as advised by him. This path is the following—he should get rid of all his inherent natural faults such as having Kaam¹ (worldly passions, lust and desires) etc., do his assigned duties and deeds and go about his life in the ethical way sanctioned by the scriptures (i.e. follow a righteous and auspicious code of conduct), inculcate in himself the four noble virtues², and endowed with these great eclectic qualities he should diligently try to concentrate his attention on and then experience the presence of the supreme transcendental authority of the Lord in his own lotus-like heart. With this experience called self-realisation, he goes beyond the third state of existence of the consciousness called Sushupta which is the deep sleep state of consciousness, and

witnesses the pure Atma which is none other than that Lord himself personified. That is, he has reached a higher state of existence when he can witness the pure consciousness and self-illuminated Atma, and its blissful, eternal and non-dual form.

This realisation (that his true self is the supreme entity called Atma residing in his bosom) further inspires him to be convinced that 'I am one and unique, but sometimes ago I had been deluded and misled by a veil of ignorance to forget about my Atma's truthful, eclectic and divine form. As a result of being under the influence of various Vasanas (worldly passions, desires and aspirations) and being enveloped by them during my waking state, I had erroneously believed that I was the Tejas³ during the dreaming state of consciousness.

In the same manner, when I had got rid of these two states of existence (i.e. the waking and dreaming states) and had entered the third state (of existence called deep sleep state or Sushupta), I began to believe that I was Pragya⁴.

But now with the dawn of truthful realisation of the Atma, I am convinced that 'I am only one' (and all the forms that I had thought I had were actually not the correct description of my true self). All those different forms in which I had been were due to the different circumstances and states in which my body and its conscious level existed. In essence, I am only one and not changing; there was no other thing but 'me' or 'I'. Once this wisdom and erudition dawns upon a creature, he begins to appreciate the truthfulness of the statement 'I am the pure and non-dual Brahm', as a result of which all notions of duality and differences of perceptions are dispelled for good.

When the enlightened seeker begins to concentrate his attention upon the self-illuminated entity ensconced in his own bosom, he becomes one like it (because one becomes what he thinks about and the company which he keeps). That is, he assumes the divine eclectic form of Brahm (i.e. he becomes enlightened about his own divine self and its truthful form as the Atma which is the supreme transcendental Brahm personified), and moves ahead on the path of Mukti (emancipation and salvation; liberation and deliverance). This realisation makes him mature in his spiritual pursuit. [That is, realisation of the great spiritual truth about one's self makes a man mature in his spiritual pursuits. He would not be misled anymore by any kind of delusions and ignorance.] (4).

[Note—¹The various faults that afflict and torment a creature are the following—(a) The *four faults* that are related to his temperament and natural inclination and mental bearing—Kaam (worldly desires, lust, passions, greed, yearnings and aspirations; Krodh (anger, wrathfulness and vengeance); Lobh (greed, rapacity and hunger for material gains); and Moha (worldly attractions, attachments and infatuations as well as delusions and ignorance).

(b) The *five faults* or shortcomings of the body—According to Brahman 1, section 2, verse nos.1-2, there are following—viz. Kaam (worldly lust, desires, passions and yearnings), Krodh (anger, wrathfulness), Asthma or obstruction of breath, Bhaya (fear of physical harm), and Nidra (sleep, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties) (verse no. 1). Their remedy are respectively the following—viz. to be without any desires whatsoever, to be forgiving and tolerant, to eat less and moderately, to be strong, brave and courageous, and to constantly devote time and energy in contemplation and meditating upon the essential nature of things called Tattwa (i.e. to keep the mind from lying idle and instead keep it occupied in introspection and deep thoughts) (verse no. 2).

(c) The *six faults* or shortcomings of the body called 'Urmis' are the problems associated with this gross world that has a physical origin, takes a birth and ultimately ends or dies. Naturally they are not applicable to the supreme Lord who does not take birth and does not die. These so-called 'Vikars' are the following—(1) problems associated with birth, (2) problems associated with growth, (3) problems associated with consequences of deeds done and actions taken by a creature in this world, (4) problems associated with gradual decay and decline of the body and its functions, (5) problems associated with old age and its attendant horrors, and (6) problems associated with the ultimate destruction and end of everything that relates to the creature. One will observe that the life of a creature is a continuous graph of sorrows, sufferings and pains of one or the other kind. It is only when the creature realises the truth of existence and who he really is that he begins to disassociate himself from the body and the world, and thus is able to break free from this seemingly interminable cycle of horrors.

²The *four great and noble virtues* that must be inculcated by spiritual aspirants that help success in their spiritual pursuit are the following—(a) Vivek—wisdom, erudition, reasoning, discrimination, discretion, intelligence and prudence; (b) Vairagya—renunciation, detachment, dispassion and indifference towards everything and everyone; (c) the so-called six assets which are the following--(i) Sham (having self restraint, control, peace, tranquility, serenity, bliss and stoic-ness as well as equanimity and remaining unruffled), Dam (tolerance, forbearance, fortitude; (iii) Upriti (renunciation, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement); (iv) Titksha (endurance, patience, fortitude, sufferance, equanimity); (v) Samadhan (solution, answer, lack of confusion or doubts, clarity of thoughts and conception); and (vi) Shraddha (having faith, belief, conviction, reverence and devotion); and (d) Mumukshu—a sincere desire to attain emancipation and salvation, liberation and deliverance.

³The subtle body of the creature, consisting of the mind-intellect complex, during his dreaming state of existence is called *Taijas*. The word Taija means that is powerful and majestic. Since the mind and intellect has stupendous potential as compared to the gross body of the creature, it is referred to as Taijas. Its counterpart at the macro level is called the Hiranyagarbha.

⁴Similarly, the causal body of the individual creature is called *Pragya*, meaning enlightened, intelligent, wise and erudite. Since the Atma which is pure consciousness residing in the bosom of the creature's causal body possesses all these qualities, it is called Pragya.]

5. The Mana (the subtle mind and heart complex) which has different 'Sankalps' (i.e. has various volitions, determinations, vows and resolutions that have to be fulfilled) is said to be under a bondage, while freedom from such shackles is called 'Moksha' (i.e. the mind and heart that is free from the fetters created by having various Sankalps is deemed to be liberated) (5).

6. A person who has attained that exalted state of existence of consciousness and possesses glorious qualities (as described in the foregoing verses) is then not at all concerned with what his various organs of perception such as the eye perceive vis-à-vis the external world. He neither is affected by nor does he have even a trace of (literally 'no smell' of) any of the delusions and ignorance that are so characteristic of this external

material but artificial world of sense objects. He perceives the whole world through the eye of wisdom and enlightenment, and realises that in this deluding world the only essence that is there which is worth accepting and dealing with is nothing but the consciousness known as the Atma or soul; the rest is all fictitious and illusive. Or in other words, the Atma is an image of all that is worth lauding, worth admiring and worth accepting in this world; the Atma is the essence of what is known as the world (and the rest is all ignorance based delusion and an illusionary creation of the mind). This Atma is the pure consciousness residing in the aspirant's own bosom. So with this grand realisation he firmly thinks that 'I am Brahm' (because whatever is there in this creation is nothing but a manifestation of the same transcendental supreme authority known as Brahm that also happens to be his Atma, as the Atma of the creature is also a part of creation and not outside it). But this statement precludes the existence of the negative notion of 'Ahankar', or the sense of pride and ego that the person is the supreme authority himself, because this statement comes with the supreme realisation of the absolute Truth and in such states of realisation there is no scope of negative notions to have any place.

[This idea that I am such and such, and have such great powers and authority, is a character of worldly people who are under the influence of ignorance about their real form and nature, and are deluded by such notions as I am this and I am that. These stupid ideas do not ever enter the mind of a really intelligent and wise person; he would be rather humble and pious and submissive and modest, and he would be devoid of all forms of haughtiness and arrogance and hypocrisy that are generated by ignorance and delusions of self-grandeur.]

The eclectic and holistic notion and the firm conviction that 'all this is Atma' (and what is not Atma is not real) lends in him a sense of fulfillment and contentedness. Since he has realised that he is that Atma, he feels accomplished and fortunate (6).

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Brahman 2, Section 5.

1. When Yogi (ascetic; spiritual aspirant) attains the supreme state of realisation, when he becomes fully contented and fulfilled, and when he has transcended the fourth state of exalted existence of consciousness called Turiya, he is deemed to have reached the crown or pinnacle of spiritual accomplishments. In this state, he becomes as honourable and adorable, as exalted and holy as the supreme transcendental Brahm himself.

'He is Brahm' (i.e. there is no difference between him and the supreme authority of existence)—the people recognise and honour him as such (1).

[Note—This is a very important observation; it shows and proves that Brahm is not some abstract God living in some distant heaven and lording over his subjects in an arbitrary manner. This verse shows that realisation of the Truth and its accompanying virtues can make any person equivalent to Brahm; in fact that person becomes Brahm himself. In other words, Brahm is here amongst us, he resides in our very midst, he is none but all of us in our pristine pure forms, but the only distance that separates a person from being Brahm from a person who is not Brahm is the level of his wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, noble virtues, auspicious qualities, righteous demeanors, higher state of

mental and intellectual evolvment, and the state of his realisation of the Truth besides the level to which he has been able to overcome his negativity, delusions and ignorance.]

2. Such a person becomes an object of adoration and honour, of reverence and praise for the whole world; he attains an iconic stature, is lauded for his exalted state of mind and intellect as well as for his superior knowledge of the Truth. He acquires freedom to move unhindered and fearlessly in the whole world (i.e. all places are accessible to him; he is welcomed everywhere; and no place can influence his mental convictions and beliefs, making him doubtful and perplexed).

He symbolically establishes his atomic (microcosmic) soul or individual Atma in the vast (macrocosmic) Soul or the universal and supreme Atma of creation called the Parmatma, thereby losing his own independent identity and becoming inconsequential in the process just like the case of a dot in the sky being so minute against the background of the vastness of the sky that the dot is just not visible at all as it merges and gets lost in the fathomless infinity of the sky, virtually becoming an integral part of and inseparable from the latter.

Having lost his worldly individuality and having established himself in the supreme Brahm, he acquires all the virtues that are associated with Brahm—i.e. he becomes immaculate, uncorrupt and pure; he becomes non-dual and one; he is devoid of any grossness, crassness, dumbness, stupidity, delusions and ignorance; he becomes humble, simple-hearted and devoid of any deceit and pretensions; and he loses all interests in mundane affairs of this world and therefore appears to be aloof, disinterested and detached from all non-spiritual affairs of this entrapping, artificial and deluding world. This eclectic state of his existence is called ‘Yog-nidra’ or a state of virtual sleep during meditation when the practitioner experiences the peace and bliss that comes during sleep when all worldly worries and torments stop to disturb the mind’s peace, and this gives immense bliss to the person who remains in a state of beatitude and felicity as long as he is in that state, oblivious of his worldly surroundings and his mundane circumstances. For a truly realised person, this state is not limited to a fixed period of time, but it becomes perpetual and everlasting, as a result of which the experience of beatitude and felicity too becomes perpetual and everlasting.

Following this magnificent and unmatched path of obtaining bliss, peace and tranquility, he becomes Jivan Mukta, i.e. he finds freedom from the tormenting snares of this world even though he lives in it with a body and goes about his normal duties as ordained for him¹ (2).

[Note--¹This is made possible because of the fact that he never indulges in any thing pertaining to this world—he has no desires, no aspirations, no hopes, no attachments and no hatreds, no unfulfilled tasks and no exaltation about what is accomplished, etc. In short, he remains totally detached from the world and its affairs, and therefore he is freed from its worries. Being under bondage gives miseries and torments to a man, it robs him of his peace of mind and rest of heart, but to be free from all fetters of serfdom is the greatest boon that this life can provide a man with. So this person is Mukta (free, liberated and emancipated) even though he lives in this world surrounded by all the unavoidable characteristic problems associated with worldly life. His Atma, which is his true identity, remains aloof from the world, and the ascetic virtually lives in a perpetual sleep-like state of total peace and tranquility even though he lives in this world with a gross body, for he has reached that exalted state of existence where the body simply

becomes inconsequential. He is virtually in a perpetual state of sleep, because when a man is sound asleep, the body matters not to him.]

3. Those persons who remain perpetually submerged in that fathomless ocean of bliss and tranquility (that comes with self-realisation and when the aspirant has reached the trans-Turiya state of exalted existence as described in verse no. 1) are called accomplished Yogis or realised ascetics (3).

4. Compared to such Yogis, even the Gods such as Indra (the king of Gods) and all other Gods get only a fraction of the happiness and joy, the bliss and felicity, the sense of contentedness and fulfillment that is available to them. Such Yogis who have accessed the supreme form of beatitude and felicity that is not even available to the Gods are indeed great and fortunate. He is called a 'Param Yogi', or the supreme Yogi or the most exalted amongst other Yogis. This is the mysterious secret unraveled by this Upanishad; this is the eclectic divine knowledge revealed by it (4).

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Brahman 3, Section 1

1. The great sage Yagyavalkya asked the exalted Mandal Purush (the divine supreme Lord present as the splendorous Sun)—'Oh Lord! You had preached me about the state of mind called 'Amanask'¹, i.e. the state in which the mind remains totally detached and uninterested in the surrounding world and its sense objects, and consequentially obtains peace, tranquility and serenity. [See Brahman 2, Section 2, verse no. 4.] I have forgotten about it, I request you to tell me about it once again' (1).

[Note—¹The word *Amanask* literally means without the influence or interference of the mind; being de-linked from the mind; annihilation of the mind; absence of the mind. This state leads to tranquility and peace for the creature and his soul. The Atma, which is truthful 'self' of the creature, generally interacts with the outside world through the mind-intellect complex. When the mind is snapped shut, the chain of receptions and responses of the Atma vis-à-vis the world also gets snapped. The Atma then remains cocooned in the sheath called the bliss sheath which surrounds it in the causal body. It is not impinged upon by the perplexing impetuses from the outside world because the circuit has been broken at the level of the mind. Hence, the Amanask state is when the Atma of the creature, i.e. the pure consciousness, becomes detached from and remains oblivious of the deluding external world along with its trademark problems, and consequential becomes rested, peaceful and tranquil. The Atma is uninvolved and aloof from all that the body might be doing in this world if the creature remains permanently in this Amanask state, because it is the mind and not the body that actually does the 'thinking, feeling, remembering, analyzing, deciding and responding' to the stimuli that the body receives from the external world on behalf of the creature. If the mind is stopped from functioning, then the body may be doing anything but the creature does not register that deed, and therefore the Atma is also not aware of what the body was doing and neither is it responsible for its consequences as it is not a participant in the entire process. That is why this state of Amanask is liberating for the creature's Atma. It also follows that the mind-intellect complex is the one that decides whether or not the creature gets involved in a deed.]

2. That divine and exalted Purush replied, 'Alright, so be it. That state of Amanask is most mysterious, magnificently divine and highly eclectic, and by its knowledge and diligent practice an aspirant can become satisfied, fulfilled, grateful and successful in accomplishing his spiritual aim. As a reward of this state, he remains constantly in the Shambhavi Mudra (2).

[Note--That is, when he has reached the mental plane when he can remain detached from and dispassionate towards this material world on a perpetual basis, he is deemed to be constantly in a meditative posture known as Shambhavi Mudra; he is able to coordinate the functioning of his body and his mind so that the benefits derived from doing this form of meditative exercise are easily available to him. This Mudra has been described in Brahman 2, Section 1, verse no. 5 above.]

3. A wise person who has an eclectic and holistic view of the Divinity, who views this world with the eyes of spiritualism and wisdom, sees that supreme transcendental entity which is the ultimate Truth and Reality of all that exists, and which is only one and non-dual, as Brahm. As a result of this perspective, his existential vision changes.

He sees the same Lord everywhere, having countless names and as many attributes and qualities. The Lord is known as the Ishwar (the supreme Lord of creation; the sum total of all the macrocosmic causal bodies of this creation); is Apramaye (having the following attributes or qualities—boundless, limitless, endless, measureless and without any parameters); is Aj (one who has no beginning, one who is unborn); is Shiva (auspicious, truthful, wise, enlightened and renunciate; the patron God of ascetic;); is the Param Akash (one who has the highest degree of qualities possessed by the sky—such as being vast, measureless, fathomless, eternal, infinite, without a beginning and end, pure and uncorrupt and incorruptible; one that is all-pervading and all-encompassing like the sky; one in whose bowl the entire creation has been conceived, is born, is nourished and in which it finally perishes); is Niralamb (one who neither has nor needs any support or prop for its existence or being); is Advitiya (one who is unique, non-dual, one and only one, matchless and without a parallel); is Brahma (the creator of the visible world; the creator of knowledge symbolised by the Vedas); is Vishnu (the sustainer and caretaker of the creation; the Viraat Purush); and is Rudra (one of the forms of Shiva responsible for conclusion of creation; famous as anger personified) etc.

In other words, a man—who is enlightened enough to see that the essential operational factor present in all these entities is none else but Brahm who is also the essential factor of the conscious Atma present in the cave-like heart of the creature—becomes firmly established in his Atma. With this eclectic awareness and holistic knowledge of who or what Brahm is, he becomes free from all types of doubts and perplexities caused by so many theories and doctrines. This also creates a sense of detachment from and disillusionment with all things which are not real and deluding instead, and which are created by ignorance of the reality. So such a wise, enlightened and self-realised man transcends all worldly notions and emotions, and instead experiences the state of the mind called 'Unmani'¹, i.e. he lives with no interest in any thing that is not the truth, he remains aloof and in constant state of detachment from everything, and instead remains focused on the Atma of which he is convinced as being the only spiritual Truth. For all practical purposes as far as the world is concerned, he is aloof and detached like a man disillusioned with its charms, but this happens because he

is charmed by something more enduring and eternal! [See also Brahman 2, Section 2, verse no.4.]

When all the sense organs of the body have ceased to matter (i.e. when all the different organs cease to perceive and react to those perceptions), that person begins to drift in an ocean of utter bliss of Brahm realisation. He becomes unwaveringly calm, serene and tranquil, steady in his state which is devoid of any restlessness, agitations, perplexities, consternations and general state of flux of the mind for which it is so notorious. This meditative practice makes him as steady and unwavering as the flame of lamp which has been placed at a place where there is no wind blowing, where there is absolute stillness of air. This helps him to attain that Brahm who is himself steady, unwavering, still, constant, uniform and unchanging (3).

[Note—¹Refer also to Shandilya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 7, verse no. 17-17 ½ .]

4. Like a dried up tree, or a person who has fainted or is sleeping soundly when he lies still like a log of wood or an unconscious body, not even aware of his breath and the existence of the body itself, such a spiritually accomplished person as described in aforesaid verses also becomes immune to all restlessness and agitations caused by worldly miseries, sorrows and pains, as well as by the excitements and exultations created by the various gratifications, pleasures and comforts proffered by this material world of sense objects. A man who has achieved this exalted state of existence has achieved the state where there is great peace, tranquility, serenity and bliss. This prevents his Mana (mind) from being extrovert and expansionist (i.e. the mind remains satisfied with what it has instead of trying to grasp at everything on which it can lay its hand on like a hungry rapacious dog eyeing every morsel of food at every doorstep, and barking madly if any attempt is made to shoo it away, or if another dog tries to snatch what it thinks rightly belongs to it). A calm mind finds rest and peace by plunging and submerging itself in the ocean of bliss represented by the awareness of the all-pervasive existence of the fount of eternal peace and happiness, the fount of beatitude and felicity which is known as the universal Consciousness of creation. This Consciousness is known as Parmatma, or the supreme universal Soul of creation (4).

5. Even as no milk remains in the cow's udder after the cow has been milked, when all the organs of the body are rendered ineffective or conquered and made redundant by practice of Yoga, the mind also gets annihilated automatically.

[This is because the mind depends upon the organs to receive its inputs—as the various perceptions, such as different pleasant and unpleasant sights, smells, sounds, tastes and touch or feelings, and as the sense of enjoyments or sufferings received from the various organs of action. When these organs cease to have any relevance for the aspirant ascetic, the mind would automatically cease to be relevant because the mind is needed by him to monitor these organs and their functioning, to receive their inputs and analyse them, and then react accordingly. So in effect, the mind is also made redundant with the redundancy of the organs.]

This is defined as the state of being 'Amanask' (as mentioned in verse no. 1-4 above) (5).

6. When the aspirant is initiated into the path of Brahm realisation through the great saying (truth) 'Tattwa-masi', and after he has realised the truthfulness of this saying through the process outlined above in these verses, he becomes firmly convinced of the fact that 'I am indeed the eternal and infinite, pure and uncorrupt Parmatmam or the supreme Soul of creation personified'. With this realisation, all distinctions are eroded; he becomes convinced of and firmly believes in the veracity of the fact that 'you are I' and 'I am you', i.e. there is no difference between you and me.

[This is because the same Atma resides in all the creatures as their essential consciousness, life and identity, and this Atma is a miniature personification of the supreme Atma of the entire creation. Since the basic factor, the underlying principle is the same in all the myriad forms in which this vast existence exists, the essential and unique identity and individuality of all the creatures is the one and the same; there is no duality and dichotomy. Since the creation is a varied manifestation of the same Brahm, it follows that the spiritual aspirant or the ascetic who has become convinced of the truth of the saying 'Tattva Masi' becomes himself a personification of Brahm as much as the other person standing in front of him. This is the great non-dual principal of Vedanta.]

This path which has no confusions and doubts leads to uninterrupted peace and bliss. When a spiritual aspirant finds this path, he feels fortunate and blessed, he feels accomplished and fulfilled, he gets the satisfaction of success that one gets in any noble and auspicious endeavour (6).

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Brahman 3, Section 2

1. A person whose mind and heart (i.e. the subtle Mana) has been completely submerged in the 'Parakash'¹ (i.e. whose Mana becomes inseparable and indistinguishable from the supreme transcendental Truth that is as fathomless, vast, infinite, eternal and measureless as the space of the bottomless cosmos), who has attained the state of mind called 'Unmani'² (i.e. has become disinterested in the delusions and diversions created by this illusionary world of sense objects that trap a creature in its snare of deeds and their consequences), and has therefore freed himself from the clutches of his sense organs (i.e. has withdrawn from being engrossed in gratification of the sense organs and fulfillment of their natural instincts and urges, for whom the world perceived by the various sense organs of perception and the world in which he interacts with his organs of action ceases to matter or have an existence)—for such a person, the fruit of all the good, auspicious and righteous deeds done by him in his previous lives and their accumulated auspicious results are deemed to have matured in the form of attainment of the most exalted and sought-after state of existence called 'Kaivalya'³ (which is state of no confusions, doubts, consternations, perplexities and dilemmas about the truthful form of liberation and deliverance; it is literally the only one state where there is no question of seeking any other better form of liberation and deliverance from the fetters that tie a creature to this endless cycle of deeds and the compulsion of having to suffer from the consequences of those deeds, leading the creature to remain perpetually fallen in the trap of birth and death, for it is only when he disassociates himself at the mental plane from the deeds done by his body that he is able to break this seemingly interminable chain).

This state of Kaivalya bestows upon him eternal, steady and wholesome bliss and contentedness as well as a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment which marks an end to all sorts of sufferings, pains and torments from which he has been suffering over a long period of time in numerous lives. These sufferings symbolise the different sins that he had committed over that period and the consequences of which he had to endure even much against his will. So this state of Kaivalya acts as the panacea for all his spiritual ailments.

With the removal of all duplicity and confusions, he remains firmly convinced about the greatness of his 'true self', the pure conscious and enlightened Atma established in his own heart, and basks in the glory of the great truth about the self, which is the realisation 'I am Brahm'⁴.

[This is because when a self-realised person has arrived at the ultimate truth about the non-duality of creation, all spiritual confusions are dispelled and doubts are erased. He understands that the essential consciousness present inside his bosom is the actual thing, and the rest of the visible world, including his own body that lives in the world and interacts with it, is gross and inane. This consciousness is the essence of life, and not anything that is not-essential. This is easy to understand because any 'truth' can be only one and not two; if anything is essential, it cannot be non-essential simultaneously. In the spiritual and metaphysical field, this truth is the Atma of the individual creature and its counterpart is the Brahm which is the consciousness of the entire creation. The realisation of this 'truth' helps him to conclude that he is none other than Brahm in a miniature form.]

This realisation inculcates in him a sense of fulfillment, a sense of having successfully accomplished the aim of all his spiritual pursuits over numerous lives for attaining permanent peace and rest for his self, i.e. for his soul or Atma because the 'self' here refers to the Atma and not the body. Once he attains this peace through the path as described in this Upanishad (as well as others), he feels fully contented and satisfied with himself, with nothing more to seek and aim for (1).

[Note—¹Parakash—see also Brahman 1, Section 2, verse no. 13 and its note.

²Unmani— see also Brahman 2, Section 2, verse no. 4, and Brahman 3, Section 1, verse no. 3.

³Kaivalya—see also Brahman 2, Section 3, verse no. 1.

⁴I am Brahm—see also Brahman 3, Section 1, verse no. 5, and Brahman 2, Section 4, verse no. 6.]

2. 'The supreme transcendental Parmatma and the Atma of the individual is the same'—a wise and self-realised teacher who is teaching this principle to his disciple must also be a firm believer of what he is teaching or preaching. Therefore, the Purush present in the 'Aditya Mandal' (here referring to the divine Spirit who was preaching Yagyavalkya in the form of the Purush present in the splendorous disc of the Sun) embraced sage Yagyavalkya as he proclaimed—'You are me'!

[This statement is the other way of saying 'I am Brahm' or 'I am you' with the only difference that here the Supreme Being is addressing the individual creature with this truthful statement instead of the other way round. This verse indicates that the glory of the Lord descended from heaven in the form of a splendorous and radiant halo of light and enveloped sage Yagyavalkya as he stood in a meditative posture in rapt attention, listening to the disembodied voice of Brahm preaching him the tenets of this revealed Upanishad. This divine shaft of spiritual energy virtually came and rested upon the sage, zapping him so that for a moment he must have felt as if he was

struck by some high-voltage eclectic discharge from heaven. The result was that now sage Yagyavalkya himself acquired that high-powered divine and mystical energy as well as was charged by the 'spirit of the Purush' who had descended from heaven and symbolically entered Yagyavalkya just like a discharge of lightening that streaks down from the clouds and vanishes in the earth below.]

This is how the teacher or the Guru (who was the Purush or the divine Spirit or the supreme transcendental Lord in a personified form, or the disembodied voice from the heavens personified, or even the inner voice of sub-consciousness speaking aloud) had taught this great knowledge to his disciple (Yagyavalkya) by embracing him (i.e. by welcoming him and accepting him as his disciple, and showing him the greatest of respect; by showing him that what is being preached is indeed meant by the preacher because a man embraces those whom he treats as his equal) (2).

[Note—By embracing Yagyavalkya, the Mandal Purush wished to emphasise the fact that he has warmly accepted the sage not only as his disciple but also has his equal. Both the Mandal Purush and Yagyavalkya appeared to be united and surrounded by a common halo of divine brightness that engulfed them like the halo of the flame around the wick of a candle. Further, this indicates that the Supreme Being blessed Yagyavalkya with a great and rare honour by embracing him personally.]

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Brahman 4, Section 1.

1. After that, sage Yagyavalkya asked the divine Purush or the Lord present in the splendorous halo around the sun, 'Please tell me about the characteristic features of the 'Vyom-Panchak', or the five forms of subtle skies'. [See also Brahman 1, Section 2, verse nos. 11-13 in this context.] (1).

2. That Purush replied that the sky has five subtle forms or categories—viz. Akash, Parakash, Mahakash, Suryakash and Paramakash (2).

3. 'Akash' (the Firmament) is that sky or space which is completely dark from within and without (because it is the space just above the surface of the earth and has no light of its own). 'Parakash' is that sky or space which is like the fire of death at the time of doomsday, or like the fire of hell. 'Mahakash' is that sky element which is full of immeasurable radiance and splendour from within and without (and is therefore has the opposite characteristic as that of the Akash). 'Suryakash' is that sky or space that resembles the dazzle and splendour of the sun (because it is in the vicinity of the latter). Finally, the 'Paramakash' is that sky which is indescribably bright, all pervading and all encompassing, and is an abode of immense bliss, joy and happiness (because it is the subtle sky where the supreme transcendental Brahm, who possesses all these characteristics displayed by this sky, is present) (3).

4. A person is definitely affected by the object which is the target of his attention and mental focus (4).

[Note—This is because he constantly, consistently and persistently thinks about this ideal, his goal, and this thinking affects him at his sub-conscious and psychological level. So he acquires certain traits that are inherently possessed by his object of adoration. He

would begin to see the world with a vision that is conditioned by the way his sub-conscious and psychology has been affected by constant thoughts of the object that he adores and worships. There is a lot of symbolism here.

For example, if he has a narrow-minded view and limited knowledge of spiritualism and metaphysics, and perceives the creation as limited to the gross mortal creation upon this earth, then the sky just above the earth, called the 'Akash', becomes his horizon and he cannot see beyond it, remaining submerged in something that is dark, and would therefore remain enveloped in the veil of darkness of ignorance.

If he perceives the sky as a place where the hell is located, i.e. if his understanding of the sky element is limited by the view that the sky is symbolised by the 'Parakash' which is nothing but hell where people go after death to suffer for their deeds, then he remains submerged in sorrows, sufferings, pains and miseries for the entire length of his life.

On the contrary, if he is wise and sees the sky as one of the five elements of creation, i.e. as the 'Mahakash', then he becomes as majestic, pure, glorious and radiant as the sky element. That is, he shines in his wisdom and erudition, his sagacity and enlightenment.

If his ideal is the sky which has the qualities of the sun, i.e. the Suryakash, then also he shines like the sun, giving light to others by his wisdom and erudition, by his knowledge and sane advice, showing them the righteous and auspicious path to liberation and deliverance just like the sun lights up the world by its light and shows the path to everyone who wish to go somewhere. Besides this, he remains alert and active as a man is during the day time, as opposed to the night hours when he is supposed to sleep.

Finally, if he worships the sky as the 'Paramakash', i.e. as the sky which is radiant from the radiance effusing from the supreme Brahm residing in it, then he is sure to become one like that Brahm himself. He too would become eternal and glorious as Brahm, he too would have a vast vision and develop a holistic view of this creation, and he too would be endowed with such qualities as equanimity, fortitude, magnanimity etc. that are the hallmarks of someone who is really holy, pious and divine.]

5. Those Yogis (ascetics) who do not have a complete, holistic and comprehensive knowledge of the following—(a) Navchakras¹ (the nine subtle energy centers in the body), (b) Shadadhars² (the six seats or bases in the body), (c) Trilakshaya (the three perceptions of the world—as gross, as subtle and as causal; it also refers to the vision of wisdom acquired when the so-called 'third eye', located at the tri-junction of the two eyebrows and the root of the nose, is activated), and (d) Vyom-Panchak (the five skies described above as well as in 1/2/13)—are Yogis (ascetics who employ meditative techniques for attaining spiritual prowess and success in obtaining liberation and deliverance from the fetters that tie them down to this mundane deluding world) only in name, i.e. they pass off as an ascetic just because of their external appearance, but they are only imposters; they do not have real knowledge of what the fundamental aspects of Yoga are. [That is, it is imperative for an ascetic to have a thorough knowledge of these fundamental principles of Yoga in order to qualify for being truly called a real and attained Yogi.] (5)

[Note—¹The *Navchakras* are the following—Vyom Chakra located in the top of the head, Bhru Chakra located in the middle of the eyebrows, Anahat Chakra located in the heart region, Swadhisthan Chakra located in the region of the groin, Mooladhar Chakra located in the region of the anus, Nabhi Chakra located in the middle of the navel, Kantha Chakra located in the throat region, Taluka Chakra located in the base of the tongue, and Brahm Randhra Chakra located in the skull at its top as a hair like slit.

²The *Shadadhars* are the following—Muladhar, Udriyan or Swadishtan, Agni Kund, Manipur, Rajdant or Ghanika, Jalandhar or Kapal.]

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Brahman 5, Section 1

1. A Mana (the subtle mind and heart complex) that is engrossed in pursuing any or all of the objects of the world that are the subject matter of the mind is deemed to be the one that shackles a creature, while the Mana that has no objects to pursue (i.e. that is free from any desires to be fulfilled and goals to be accomplished) is the medium of obtaining liberation and deliverance from all sorts shackles that tie a creature to this mundane, deluding and entrapping world (1).

[Note—When a man's mind is free from pursuing any materialistic objects in this world, when he does not want anything from anyone, when he does not have any kind of expectation of any honour and praise, any benefit and reward of any kind whatsoever, he would not have to compromise his integrity and dignity in order to please anyone, and he would be contented with himself and do what his conscious tells him is right, noble and virtuous. All spiritual bondages arise because of the mind getting involved in the deluding effects created by its interaction with the world. Once this interaction is disrupted, once the mind does not allow itself to get involved with any sense objects of this materialistic world, it would naturally find time to divert its energy towards other nobler activities, such as spiritual pursuit. This world of delusions and ignorance is a formidable obstacle in spiritual pursuit, and the restless mind has a tendency to get attracted towards things that appear charming and alluring; it finds great comfort and pleasure in the world of material objects, which are nevertheless perishable and transient. The mind is like a honeybee, going from one flower to another in search of nectar. The mind jumps from one object to another, and never finds rest or feels contented. Like the honeybee, it has a whole lot of work to do, never realising that all its efforts would only tie down the creature in a cycle of birth and death much like the bee going to and fro endlessly between the flower and the honeycomb.

Since the mind is like the minister of the sovereign known as the pure conscious Atma residing in the bosom of the creature, if the mind is corrupted by being influenced by this already corrupted world, its advice given to the Atma would also be tinged by distorted versions of the truth, the 'truth' which is, in its pristine and uncorrupted form, eternal and imperishable, and not transient and perishable like the world of material objects. This wrong influence of the mind would lead the Atma to become tarnished by delusions and faults for which it is not responsible because it was the deluded mind that gave a distorted, biased and misconceived advice to the Atma. Thus, when the mind is free from any tainting effects of the world, it would act as a wise minister who can liberate his king from any kind of trouble that the latter finds himself in; the wise mind can deliver a creature's soul from the trap of this mortal world and provide it with eternity. On the other hand, a deluded mind can pull the creature's soul down and keep it mired in delusions and ignorance.

The heart is part of the entire game plan because the Atma is a resident of lotus-like heart; there are many Upanishads that say this. Whereas the mind controls the thinking process, the heart controls the emotional aspect of a creature's behaviour and general outlook. They work in tandem to decide a particular individual's personality traits, his character and qualities. The process of perceiving the world is actually done by the brain or the mind through the organs of perception, but once the information reaches the heart

it gets immediately hooked to things that appeal to it. It then forces the mind to remain attached to that object which seems attractive and charming so that a continuous inflow of pleasant inputs is received. In a similar vein, if the heart does not find anything appealing, it would prod the mind to go somewhere else. Similarly, the mind can also prod the heart to control its impulses if the object seems to be harmful to the creature by the mind's intellectual faculty. So when we say the Mana has to be disassociated from everything that forms the object of its attention, we mean both the heart and the mind. Therefore, both must be properly reined in for spiritual liberation and deliverance of the creature. The heart and mind are like the two horses of a chariot, both requiring equal attention and control, because otherwise the passenger, the Atma, would be thrown off the rocking chariot.]

2. The whole world is perceived by the 'Chitta', i.e. by the mind and the intellect. So, if the mind-intellect loses its attachments with this world, if it does not give shelter to any thoughts of the world, the 'Mana', i.e. the mind and heart complex, also becomes detached and disassociated from them. This state of the Mana is known as 'Unmani' state of existence wherein the Mana has no interest in anything; it remains in an indifferent and detached state of existence; it has got nothing to do with this world.

This maturity in spiritual path makes it possible for the creature to lose its sense of dependence upon the Chitta and the Mana in order to live in and interact with this world. In other words, the creature who has been totally disinterested in the world by the virtue of overcoming its Chitta and Mana becomes eligible to dissolve its independent existence in this world and prepare for its merger with its primary source where it would get eternity and universality (2).

3. The entity that can start and bring to fruition this process of control and annihilation or dissolution of the mind, i.e. the entity that inspires the mind to get detached from the external world as well as from the sense organs of perception and action that are part of the gross body and responsible for the creature's interaction with the physical world, is the entity which is known as 'I' or 'Me'. It is the 'I' that can do it; it is the 'I' who will benefit from it; it is the 'I' that is the cause of this entire world created by my imaginative mind, and it is 'I' who can bring an end to this chain of events (3).

[Note--That is, the wise man must realise that it is he himself who is responsible for his liberation and deliverance, and it is he himself who is responsible for his remaining tied in shackles. No one else is to be blamed for both these circumstances. Here the word 'I' is not egoistic or a show of haughtiness, but the dawning of realisation that a man is responsible for his own emancipation and salvation on the one hand, and for falling in the trap of worldly delusions on the other hand.]

4. The unspoken word (that is present as the cosmic eternal vibrations in the ether which has been conceptualised as the word OM representing Brahm) has a sound in it (which is the energy of the ethereal sound waves produced in the cosmos and is referred to as the Naad). This sound has energy manifested as light in it, and within this light is the entity called Mana (4).

[Note—According to the philosophy of Vedanta, this whole creation is submerged in a sea of cosmic sound known as Naad. This sound generated energy because it moved in waves as any sound is known to move, and this movement of waves in the cosmic ether generated energy. This energy powered the process of creation. One of the forms of

energy is light, and light is a metaphor for and synonymous with such grand virtues as erudition, knowledge and enlightenment. Since the world's existence is discernible by the creature because of the ability of the mind to first conceive or conceptualize it in its present shape and then perceive its details and act according to those perceptions, if the creature is able to subjugate the mind, if it is able to eliminate it altogether, then the external world would automatically vanish from the spiritual horizon. This is liberation of the creature from delusions and its attendant ignorance of the truth.

Further, the supreme transcendental Brahm is called 'Shabda Brahm' or the Brahm who is known by a 'word'. It is obvious because no one has seen Brahm, and the only way to ascertain Brahm's existence is to hear about Brahm through the words of the scriptures, and through the spoken word of the teacher who explains the great tenets of those scriptures. Brahm is also known as 'Akshar' which literally means a letter as well as something that is not perishable, that which is eternal. Letters form a word. So the logical corollary is that when we talk about something that possesses certain characteristics that are very unique, such as being eternal and imperishable, we have to use some 'word' to identify it and describe it to the best of our ability, and that is the reason why the supreme transcendental Authority and the ultimate Truth of creation known as Brahm is also called a 'Shabda' or a word. And since any word consists of letters which are called 'Akshar', literally meaning something which is imperishable, it fits the bill perfectly.]

5. The mind is the incubator where the entire world (creation) is conceived; it is the progenitor and the cause of all the three worlds (the past, the present and future; the celestial, the terrestrial and the subterranean; the heaven, the hell and the temporal; the gross, the subtle and the causal), along with their sustenance, development and annihilation or conclusion. That is, this entire creation, the whole visible world, is there because the mind sees and thinks it to be there, because the mind thinks it is relevant and important, because the mind finds pleasure and comfort there. In other words, the world is a creation of the mind, and it derives its importance and significance because of the mind. Should the mind decide that it no longer needs any of the worlds, the latter would simply cease to exist or have any relevance for the creature.

When the mind decides to cease its extrovert activities, it plunges and dissolves into a state of existence known as the exalted abode of Lord Vishnu. That is, when the mind dissociates itself from the external world of delusions and artificiality which is its own imaginative creation, then not only would this world vanish but the mind would find its self in a state which is calm and quiet and full of bliss and happiness. In this new state, none of the confusions and fears arising out of the world of perishable material objects, delusions and ignorance prevails, as a result of which it resembles the exalted and eternally peaceful, blissful and imperishable abode of Lord Vishnu, the supreme Lord whose mere presence dispels all negativity. [Vishnu is another name for the Viraat Purush who is the cosmic all pervading and all encompassing personification of Brahm. It is from this Viraat Purush that the known creation has evolved.] (5).

6. When the Mana (mind) fixes its attention on something that gives it eternal peace and bliss, which is equivalent to being in the abode of Lord Vishnu (verse no. 5), it tends (prefers) to remain there permanently and gradually becomes indistinguishable and inseparable from it. [In other words, once the Mana withdraws itself from the rocky world that is so transient and uncertain, and instead fixes itself in pure consciousness

which is steady and unfaltering as well as the only eternal spiritual truth, it finds permanent tranquility and peace. After all, the reason for it getting involved in the world in the first place was for search of happiness and peace, but in the bargain what it got was something that was not only temporary but also entrapping and deluding. What more would the Mana want if it can find something that can give it eternal peace and happiness, something that can bestow everlasting tranquility and bliss to it? By remaining submerged in the thoughts of the consciousness which is the ultimate essence and spiritual truth in creation, and hence called the 'Param Tattva', the mind gets peace, tranquility, happiness, bliss and contentedness that are steady, imperishable, infinite and eternal. So once the Mana finds permanent peace and bliss, it would naturally stick to this state of existence; it would obviously not like to go back to the world where everything is transient and illusive; it would not like to bargain eternity with transience. Once it chooses to remain permanently in the company of pure consciousness, it would be a de-facto permanent resident of this place and acquire a new identity, new habits and characteristics which are in sync with its new habitat that would distinguish it from its earlier identity as the mind tainted by worldly delusions and ignorance. It would have assumed a completely new personality that would be different from the one it had while residing or remaining engrossed in the world. It would be called a mind that is inseparable and indistinguishable from the abode of Lord Vishnu—a metaphoric way of saying that the mind had found the ultimate objective of its quest for happiness and peace.]

The steady and unfaltering state of existence of the mind brings it in direct contact with the grand truth of existence—the truth that is non-dual or Advaitya, the truth which has no second, no equal or no parallel. This non-dual state implies that there is only one truthful entity in existence, that there is only one consciousness, and that there is only one supreme Lord. It removes all dichotomy, all notions of duality and fractured view of creation. This supreme and exalted state of mental existence where there is no transience and no more confusion about what is true and what is not, the state of existence marked by profound mental stability and quietude is known as the 'Param Pada'.

The eclectic realisation of the existence of the pure consciousness as one's 'true self', to be firm and steady in this conviction is tantamount to having achieved the exalted stature of Param Pada. This is the supreme state of existence; it is the highest citadel of spiritual achievement that an aspirant can aspire for. [And this citadel is akin to reaching or having access to the abode of Lord Vishnu, the supreme Lord.] (6)

[Note--The world is sometimes pleasant and at other times it appears to be tormenting. Any one given thing is pleasant for one and unpleasant for another. There is the day and the night; there is sorrow and joy; there is birth and death; there is health and sickness; there is ignorance and wisdom; there are many sanctioned paths to attain emancipation and salvation; there is you and me; there is good and bad, etc. In other words, there is a sense of 'duality' which never gives permanent peace and bliss for which the creature yearns. But once the mind decides to shut off this world of delusions, then it lives in only one world of spiritual bliss, and it comes from self-realisation, i.e. from realising the true nature of the pure uncorrupt 'self' as the conscious Atma which has nothing to do with either with the world or its delusions. This is the supreme Tattwa or essence that is achieved by the mind that has withdrawn itself from the confusing and deluding world of duality.]

7. A person who has realised this supreme Tattwa (the essential truth about the Atma and the imaginary nature of this visible world; the basic and fundamental meaning of this world as well as the essential nature and characteristic of the mind; what is duality and what is non-duality) behaves in this world as if he is an innocent child or an intoxicated person oblivious of the surrounding world, or even one who is possessed by a spirit or devil. His behaviour becomes very odd and unconventional, and for all practical purposes it appears that he is very ignorant, stupid or dumb witted. Nevertheless, the response of the world does not bother a truly realised person even a bit for whom the gross world has ceased to exist, and who remains engrossed in the subtle world of spiritual bliss obtained by attaining the knowledge of the 'Param Tattwa' (the ultimate and truthful essence, the absolute reality) (7).

8. By constant, consistent and persistent practice of keeping the mind under leash as well as detached from and dispassionate towards the entrapping, deluding and artificial mundane world and its material sense objects, by keeping the mind from falling prey to the urge to gratify the different sense organs, and by not allowing it to be perturbed by dilemma and confusions created by the sense of duality, i.e. by developing the virtue of 'Amanask', or a neutral and detached state of the mind¹, one can perpetually feel accomplished and experience the everlasting bliss and contentedness that comes with spiritual fulfillment. [This is because the mind is no longer buffeted by confusing and at times opposing inputs from the external world, but remains steady and focused on the Truth instead. This state automatically entails a sense of non-involvement with the world and not caring for it in the least.]

When the ascetic's mind reaches this state, it will be observed that it would effect the physical functioning of his gross body. As a result, the volume of excreta such as urine and faecal matters are also diminished, and the spiritual seeker/aspirant can do with little food to eat. The parts of the body acquire inner strength, stamina, vitality and sturdiness; the gross body does appear to remain lazy, lethargic and indolent but the aspirant is able to overcome sluggishness and drowsiness caused by sleep. The eyes stop their fickle nature (of jumping from object to object); the breath becomes steady and regular (i.e. there is no huff and puff, there is no asthmatic panting or laboured breathing, and neither is there any quickened breath as usual during fevers, or after long running or some other exerting physical exercise, nor a shallow breath as during sleep or low blood pressure).

These meditative accomplishments lead to the joy and bliss of Brahm realisation, which in turn helps the seeker to attain that level of bliss and ecstasy which is so eclectic, profound and magnificent but mysterious that it can only be experienced and felt but never described in words (8).

[Note—¹The concept of *Amanask* state of the mind has been elaborately described in this Upanishad in 1/3/4; 2/2/4; 3/1/1-6 and 3/2/1.

The state of existence of the mind is similar to the one that exists during the trance-like state called Samadhi. See 2/3/4-7 in this context as well as the following verse no.9.]

9. In this way, an ascetic who remains perpetually engrossed in practicing the meditative state called 'Samadhi', and in imbibing the blissful elixir of Brahm realisation which is a fruit of this Samadhi for a prolonged time, matures and graduates to become an 'Avadhut Sanayasi' (which is the highest form of "Sanyas", the way of life of total detachment

from world and its affairs). He is deemed to be so exalted, holy and empowered with spiritual energy and vitality that the mere sight of such a person makes the entire world purified and freed from its blemishes and taints.

[That is, such people are pious and clean of heart, and they radiate certain positive energy that helps to nullify the bad effects of the negative energy created by worldly indulgences and routine evil and perversions that are so common in this materialistic world. Their presence acts as a beacon light to remove the darkness caused by the soot symbolised by worldly delusions, ignorance, evil, perversion, moral turpitude etc.]

They have acquired such divine powers and potentials that even those who are known as ‘Agyani’ (i.e. those who are ignorant of the actual truth and the rightful path to follow, and instead remain submerged in delusions and falsehoods pertaining to the world), but are fortunate enough to be in their service (i.e. who diligently follow their path and teachings though they are ignorant themselves and lack correct knowledge of the path leading to spiritual liberation and deliverance), are freed from the bondages of the world.

[In other words, those people who are not competent or able themselves to observe the rigors of the path leading to Brahm-realisation, which is called the ‘Param Pada’, but instead choose to diligently and selflessly serve and follow those who are fortunate to tread upon this eclectic and holy path—such servers or followers also reap the fruit of Brahm-realisation. This is very easy to visualise. It will be observed in our day to day lives that servants and close confidantes of rich, influential and powerful people also bask in their master’s glory, and they often wield no less influence and powers than the master himself. In fact it is often seen that the access to the master is in the hands of the servants. Besides this, just like the moon shining under the glory of the sun’s rays, the followers of a self-realised and pious soul whose spiritual achievements radiate out like a divine halo around him too acquire similar glorious hue just by the virtue of their close association with him, for there is an old adage that ‘one becomes like the company one keeps’. Therefore, the followers of an ascetic who has risen high in his spiritual pursuits so much so that he has attained an exalted stature of an Avadhut Sanyasi, which is the best and the highest form of renunciate spiritual life that can be achieved by a monk or friar or hermit, too acquire the glorious qualities and virtues possessed by their teacher and mentor. They are freed from the fetters that tie them down to this mundane life of birth and death by being shown the enlightened spiritual path of liberation and deliverance by such accomplished and acclaimed ascetics who help them to overcome the hurdles created in their spiritual progress by the dark shadow of ignorance and delusions that has completely darkened the path for them; this is accomplished by means of wise advice and guidance, by showing them the correct way by example, and by solving their myriad problems related to their spiritual progress as well as confusions that exist in their minds about what is right and what is not.]

Such a wise, enlightened and accomplished Sanyasi is able to provide liberation and deliverance to one hundred one generations in his family (i.e. compatriots, friends, and kith and kin); his father and mother, his wife and sons¹ are also the beneficiaries of this bonanza of spiritual liberation and deliverance.

[¹Their constant company has its affects upon his family members, and it is expected that a truly realised person should start the groundwork of spreading the good word and work right from those people who are directly in his contact. But it also depends much upon these individual’s own aspirations and eagerness for Mukti, or obtaining liberation and

deliverance from the cycle of ignorance and delusions, for if one is not sincerely interested himself, then merely going to the best of schools and having the best of teachers and the best of guidance would not make him a good student or succeed in life. The basic idea is that such self-realised and enlightened ascetics or hermits or monks or friars have such stupendous spiritual powers and mystical authority that they can bless others with equal greatness without their making much great effort themselves, but much would depend upon the aspirant's or seeker's own integrity, sincerity and earnestness in attaining Mukti by strictly following the guidance and example of such enlightened, self-realised and Brahm-realised teachers.]

Verily, this is what this Upanishad says; this is the profound and highly eclectic teaching of this Upanishad. Amen! (9).

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(III—D) Hansa Upanishad

This Upanishad is a dialogue between sages Gautam and Sanatkumar. It has only 21 verses. Sage Gautam asks Sanatkumar about 'Brahm Vidya', or that essential and eclectic knowledge that pertains to the truthful, eternal, supreme and transcendental authority in creation known as Brahm. On some earlier occasion this was explained by Lord Shiva to his divine consort Parvati. The Lord has emphasised that this is a very secret knowledge having a profound spiritual reach, and it should be taught or preached only to those who are blessed with the virtues of being mentally steady and intelligent, having total restraint over their sense organs, and are faithful and devoted to their Guru, or a moral preceptor and spiritual guide.

This Upanishad highlights the fact that the Atma or soul is like a divine Swan—a bird considered as a metaphor for purity, cleanliness, divinity, wisdom and enlightenment and from which this Upanishad derives its name—residing subtly in the heart of all the living beings much like fire that is inherently present in wood, and oil is in the sesame seed. To access that Brahm, the sage prescribes the path of Yoga called 'piercing of the so-called six Chakras', which means activating these subtle energy centers in the body. That supreme entity (Atma) resides in the heart which is said to be like an eight petal lotus, and that entity itself is like a pure crystal. The cosmic primordial and primary sound called Naad can be witnessed or heard by concentrating upon this entity through the means of Yoga. It is said that at the peak of this process one is able to witness the supreme transcendental Brahm. This state is akin to the trance-like state called Samadhi which is the successful culmination of meditation. The Vedas also assert that pure conscious, transcendental, enlightened, eternal, infinite, immaculate, almighty, holy, divine, self-illuminated, omnipresent, omniscient, blissful, calm and peaceful Brahm shines through during this state of consciousness.

1. Sage Gautam (approached sage Sanatkumar and) asked, ‘Oh Lord! You are an expert in all types of tenets of Dharma (righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, nobility of thoughts and conduct) and well versed in all the scriptures. Please be kind to elucidate to me the path or method by which Brahm Vidya (the truthful and holistic knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental authority of creation known as Brahm) can be acquired or learnt or known by me’ (1).

2. Sage Sanatkumar replied, ‘Oh Gautam! Listen attentively from me about the conclusion that Lord Shiva arrived at after deeply contemplating upon and debating threadbare all the body of auspicious knowledge pertaining to Dharma that exist in all the different scriptures, and he had described (preached, divulged) what he concluded to his divine consort Parvati (2).

3. This subtle, sublime and esoteric knowledge should not be divulged to an unauthorized, unworthy and incompetent person (such as a stranger, a heretic, insincere people, an illiterate fool, those who are skeptics etc.). For Yogis (ascetics and those who follow the path of meditation for self-realisation and Brahm-realisation), this profound knowledge is like a treasury. The knowledge that describes the divine form and eclectic location of the holy entity (i.e. the pure conscious Atma which in turn is a manifestation of the supreme Brahm) which is like a Swan is a provider of peace and tranquility as well as emancipation and salvation (3).

4. [This verse tells us about the eligibility criterion for being worthy of hearing and learning this Upanishad and the spiritual knowledge it contains.] The great secret of this knowledge that pertains to the divine and pure self which is the Atma of the individual conceptualized as a Swan, and by extension to the supreme transcendental cosmic Self of creation which is known as Brahm conceptualized as the Param-Hans (literally the great Swan), should be divulged or preached to only worthy and eligible people such as those who are Brahmacharis (i.e. those who observe self restraint over themselves in all matters, and follow the principles of austerity and penance in their lives), those who are of a steady, firmly grounded, calm and tranquil demeanor, those who maintain control over their sense organs and mind, those who are devoted and faithful to their Guru (moral preceptor and spiritual guide), and those who have become self-realised and enlightened about the divine nature of their pure self as being equivalent to the bird Swan by remaining engrossed in contemplation on the fundamental nature of their Atma based upon the teachings of the scriptures (4).

[Note—The enlightened and realised person thinks of himself as a *Swan* and feels exhilarated that he is not an ordinary man bogged down by worldly fetters, but an exalted soul that is like a Swan.

The bird Swan or Hans is considered the most pure, clean, wise, erudite and clever among the birds. It is said to eat pearls, which means it picks up and accepts only the best amid the variety of things available to it in the form of an assortment of various gems and jewels representing the dazzling charms of this world. It is also reputed to drink milk leaving aside the water content in it symbolising its ability to imbibe the essence and the best, and leave the rest aside. It is also the vehicle of Goddess Saraswati, the patron Goddess of knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, speech and learning,

indicating that it bears these glorious virtues. Hence, the reference to a swan while describing a creature conscious of the vital wind or Pran passing through him means the basic, inherent and intrinsic tendency of that wisened and intelligent creature is to be the best, most pure and divine, wise, awakened and enlightened, adroit, clever and sagacious like the swan, and pick all the goodness and forsake all that is bad in this world. Saraswati rides on a swan, symbolising the creature's inborn enlightenment and excellence of his mental caliber. Symbolically, Saraswati resides in his Pran because it rides on the swan, i.e. in his heart, throat and mind—that is, his heart has purity of emotions, he speaks well of all, and his wise words are sought after by all as priceless gems of wisdom, and his mind is intelligent, discerning and noble.

The alphabet 'Ha' of the word 'Hans' is sounded by the vibration of the exhaled wind passing through the vocal cords present in the throat or the wind pipe which connects to the nose, while the alphabet 'Sa' is sounded by the root of the tongue which opens into the mouth when the breath is inhaled. Both the nose and the mouth open in the same cavity called the throat. Hence, the inter relationship between 'Ha' and 'Sa' is evident. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the divine swan, but he was unaware of his own divinity and sublimity, his exalted and noble stature, till that was pointed out to him in this verse. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan.

During the twenty-four hour period covering a single day and night, a person inhales and exhales, or breathes, roughly twenty-one thousand times, because each cycle of inhalation and exhalation is equivalent to saying one Mantra 'Hans' consisting of the two syllables 'Ha and Sa'. This concept has been expounded upon in Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 24, 62-63; and Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 82-83.]

5. Even as fire is inherently and uniformly present in wood and oil is in the sesame seed, this Atma, which is treated as being equivalent to a Swan, is subtly and imperceptibly present universally in the bodies of all the living creatures of this creation. This all-inclusive knowledge and holistic approach to the world and its inhabitants makes a creature free from the fears of death (5).

[Note—A man fears death because he thinks that once he dies he would lose all the accumulated glories and worldly assets that he had acquired and accumulated by such hard labour over the years in his fruitful life. He has not been able to enjoy them to his satisfaction when he has to die. But this holistic view about the truthful nature of the 'self' who would have enjoyed these fruits of his hard labour creates in him a sense of fulfillment because if the fruits of his labour is enjoyed by others in the society then it is deemed that he has enjoyed them himself. This is because the Atma which is his 'true self' lives in all the creatures, and therefore though he leaves the present body, he still can derive comfort from the idea that he would enjoy them in some other form. This leads to selfless doing of deeds and the man becomes broad in his vision; he does not cringe for his possessions and treats them as belonging to the society. The word 'society' should be treated in the all-inclusive and holistic view of the Upanishads as indicating the entire

gamut of creation, and not restricted to any particular group of people or geographical area.

There is another hidden idea here. When a man is enlightened enough to understand what is being said here about his true self as being the pure conscious Atma with all its characteristic attributes which makes it equivalent to the supreme transcendental Being in creation, then the very notion of 'death' becomes irrelevant as that Atma never dies because it is eternal, infinite and without a birth and end. Further, he realises that his body is not his true self, rather it is only a temporary habitat for his self, and he has received it as a result of his past deeds and their consequences. This body is well known to be perishable, while the Atma is imperishable. So there is no relation between them except that of a dwelling and the dweller respectively. Therefore, leaving the body does not mean 'death', and this realisation dispels all fears of the latter.]

6. [The way to acquire knowledge pertaining to this metaphoric Hans or Swan is being described now.] To begin with, the aspirant ascetic should pull up the vital wind (i.e. the Apaana Vayu) from the anus and let it pass upwards from and through the Muladhara Chakra. The wind should then be allowed to swirl around the Swadhisthana Chakra three times, go up into the Manipura Chakra, and then encroach (spread) over the Anahata Chakra.

As a next step, the Pran (the vital wind known as breath) should be held (localized) in the Vishuddha Chakra, and the aspirant should contemplate upon the Agya Chakra followed by the Brahma Randhra Chakra.

While lifting the Apaana wind from the lower end (i.e. from the region of the anus as described above) and concentrating (localizing) the Pran wind at the top (again as described above), the aspirant should be firmly focused on the concept that he is the Trinity Gods¹ personified.

A realised and accomplished ascetic perpetually observes that formless Brahm everywhere, and true to his ideals, he too becomes one like it (i.e. he attains the fourth state of consciousness called Turiya which is obtained during the culmination of Samadhi and is the nearest state which is analogous to Brahm) (6).

[Note--¹These *Trinity Gods* consist of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder. They also signify the entire gamut of creation—right from its beginning to its conclusion. Besides this, Brahma is treated as the wisest in the creation because he produced the Vedas which are repositories of all knowledge that exist in creation, Vishnu symbolises the Viraat Purush who incorporates the entire creation in himself, and Shiva is a treasure of renunciation and asceticism.

There is another connotation of this word *trinity* from the metaphysical point of view. According to the Pranava-panishad, the Atma has three Matras or conceptual aspects. These are indicated by the three letters of the divine Mantra OM, viz. A, U and M. This word is a symbol of Brahm and by extension of the Atma. The first letter 'A' stands for the initiation of creation, the second letter 'U' stands for the extension and rolling forward of the creation, while the last and third letter 'M' stands for conclusion. Interestingly, the Sanskrit word for death is 'Mritu' which starts with 'M'.

²The *Chakras* are the various swirling subtle energy centers in the body.]

7. That 'Paramhans' (literally the supreme and exalted Swan; here referring to Brahm personified as Atma) is splendourous, radiant and brilliant with a light equivalent to uncountable number of Suns. The entire world is illuminated with its bright light (7).

[Note—The Sun's brightness lights up the world and no life can survive without it. The Atma is the only conscious factor present in the dark realm of the gross body. If there was no Atma, if there was no consciousness present in a creature, then the body would be as lifeless as the world without the Sun. The Sun is the only 'self illuminated' entity in the sky; the rest of the planets shine only by its reflected light. Not even the brilliant looking Moon would show up in its glory had it not been for the Sun. That is why the Sun is treated as a visible symbol of Brahm. There is another reason for this choice—no one can practically 'see' the Sun with naked eyes if he does not want to voluntarily become blind by its dazzle, though its presence in the sky is beyond doubt and its existence cannot be denied just because we cannot 'see' it! Similarly, Brahm *is* indeed there, though we cannot 'see' it directly, but at the most can use indirect methods of logic to do so.]

8. That pure and enlightened conscious entity known as the Hans (i.e. the Swan-like Atma of the individual creature) has eight types of 'Vrittis' (inborn and inherent tendencies, temperaments and habits that determine its character and behavioural patterns). These eight Vrittis reveal themselves, or are conceptualized in the form of eight petals of the symbolic lotus that represents the heart where this entity is seated. These petals are spread uniformly in all the directions, one petal indicating one Vritti, and indicate the various ways in which these Vrittis affect the Swan-like Atma as well as the fact that these are like the tentacles or arms of the Atma by which it interacts with and accepts the world at large.

The petal of this lotus facing towards the east represents the righteous and noble inclinations; the petal facing south-east corner (Agneya) represents sleep, indolence, drowsiness, lethargy, inertia and disinclination to work; the petal facing towards the south direction represents cruel tendencies; the petal facing the south-west angle (Nairitya) represents the inclination of the mind to be sinful, unrighteous and pervert; the petal facing towards the west represents the desires and the intellectual ability for sports, action and play; that petal facing the north-west direction (Vayabya) represents the desire and the ability to be on the move, to go, roam and wander; the petal in the north direction represents the affections of a creature for things that are graceful, gentle, beautiful, attractive, pleasant and charming; the petal in the north-east direction (Ishan) represents the desires for making charity; and the inner layer of petals surrounding the thalamus represent the tendency to renounce, to be dispassionate and detached from the artificial, deluding and sensual world of material objects.

The tendrils of this lotus represent the waking state of consciousness, the stalk represents the dream state of conscious, and the thalamus represents the deep sleep state of consciousness. When a creature represented by the divine Swan flies off from this lotus-like abode in the body (i.e. it abandons the symbolic habitat or dwelling in the 8-petal lotus represented by his heart and rises above its limiting aspects just like a householder snapping all his relationships with his home and taking to the path of Vanprastha), it obtains the fourth state of consciousness called the 'Turiya state'. Eventually, when the creature in the form of his subtle Atma called the Swan, rises high up in the sky representing its spiritual elevation, it virtually gets lost in the depths of the cosmos (sky) and loses its link with its earlier habitat in the heart of the mortal body of the creature. This state is akin to the ascetic getting drowned in the constant stream of the

reverberating cosmic sound called 'Naad' that he hears during the successful culmination of his meditative practices. This is called the post Turiya state, or the 'Turiyatit' state (8).

9. In this way, the vibrations created by the activated vital winds, right from the Muladhar Chakra to the Brahm Randhra Chakra, produce a subtle sound resembling the cosmic Naad which reverberates throughout the body of the aspirant. The divine crystal or quartz, which is pure and pristine, creates this cosmic vibration, and this crystal is known as Brahm; it is a metaphor for the esoteric supreme Spirit that is endowed with the magical and mystical powers to resonate on its own and create this vibration known as Naad! (9).

[Note—The quartz crystal is a transparent colourless form of quartz that comes naturally or can also be manufactured. It is used in optics and electronics. Its atoms produce electrical impulses by their vibrations.]

10. When the ascetic thus becomes submerged in the reverberating subtle sound emanating from the divine 'quartz crystal' (the immaculate pure conscious Atma) located in his heart as well as the activated vital winds as described earlier, he is deemed to be doing constant 'Japa' (repetition of some divine Mantras which are mystical words having magical spiritual powers), albeit in a subtle and silent mode. [This is because he does not purposely select any word, even the cosmic word OM, for the purpose of meditation, but the sound which he hears in his mind is the Naad which is crystallised or encrypted in the form of the word OM. His mind is drowned in this sound, and the numbing and sedative effect is similar to the one obtained by doing constant Japa using a continuous stream of certain words. The sound energy in the cosmic ether is harnessed by Japa, and it is utilized here to activate the symbolic quartz crystal, called the Atma, residing in the heart. This results in the latter's vibrations which translate into spiritual awakening, and obtaining the state of ecstasy and bliss.]

This involuntarily produced sound is a subtle and natural vibration that pervades in all the nerves of the body of the ascetic who hears it. This natural Japa is similar to the practice of consciously and physically repeating Mantras during meditation exercises to concentrate and focus the mind.

Now, every Mantra has six components, and with reference to this silent and involuntarily done Japa, they are the following—(a) the Rishi (the presiding sage or the chief priest who had first conceived the given Mantra and is honoured for it by being invoked in the beginning of the use of this Mantra; he is also the one who presides over its use) is the 'Hans' or the divine Swan representing the Atma of the creature; (b) the Gyatri Chanda (a special type of poetic composition used to compose sacred hymns in the Vedas) is the 'Avyakta', i.e. the indescribable feeling of ecstasy and bliss that accompanies self realisation; (c) the Devta (the patron deity for whom the Mantras are meant) is the Paramhans (the supreme Hans, i.e. the supreme Atma or Brahm); (d) the Beej of this Mantra (or the seed of the Mantra; the root sound of the particular Mantra; the cryptic letters or syllables that are used during occult practices to replace the full Mantra pertaining to a particular God or deity) is 'Hum' or 'Hung'; (e) the Shakti (esoteric mystical divine powers incorporated in any Mantra) of this Mantra is 'Sa'; and finally (f) the Kilak¹ (the peg or nail to which the powers are pegged or nailed) of this Mantra is 'So-a-ham', i.e. 'that is me' (10).

[Note--¹This *Kilak* signifies the fact that this 'Mantra', i.e. the essence of the knowledge contained in the Upanishad, helps the aspirant to remain fixed and steadfast in his beliefs and convictions that he is no one else but Divinity personified, the supreme transcendental Truth personified, Brahm personified. This realisation fills him with wholesome ecstasy, bliss and peace, and gives rest to all his restlessness and perplexities. This spiritual achievement is equivalent to obtaining liberation from the fetters of ignorance and delusions that are the hallmarks of this world, and it delivers him from the vortex of sufferings and pains of remaining trapped in the net of ignorance and delusions. The aspirant realises who his true self is, which is treated in this Upanishad as a divine Swan residing in the lotus like heart of the creature. This Swan represents Brahm in the form of the Atma of the creature. And this Atma is pure consciousness represented by the activated, vibrating quartz crystal.]

11-13. These six subtle divisions of the Mantras are symbolically repeated when one takes twenty one thousand six hundred breaths during the course of a day consisting of twenty four hours called 'Ahoratra'.

While meditating, the ascetic should pronounce the following Mantra while ritualistically purifying the heart and other parts of the body with his hands—'Suryaaye Somaaye Niranjanaaye Niraabhaasaaye Atanu Sukshma Prachodayaaditi Agnishomaabhyam Vaushat'.

[The essential meaning of this Mantra is that the divine Atma present in the heart is as splendid as the sun, as glorious as the moon, is without any faults and blemishes, is pure, holy and divine, is invisible and without any form, is most subtle, miniscule and microscopic, and is endowed with the effervescent energy present in the fire element.]

After this symbolic purification rite, one should visualise that the divine Hans or Swan (i.e. the Atma) is established in the heart which is like a lotus having eight petals (11-13).

14. The 'fire' (symbolising the sun) and the 'moon' represent the two wings of this divine Swan; the eclectic divine word 'OM' is its head; the geometrical symbol of this word OM is the Sanskrit word 'Ooo' with a dot at the top and it represents its third eye of wisdom and enlightenment; its mouth is Rudra (one of the ferocious forms of Lord Shiva, the annihilator of creation); its two feet are represented by Rudrani (the divine consort of Rudra). This symbolic form of divinity has two forms—viz. one that is visible and the other that is not visible representing the creature and the Atma respectively. Just like the Swan makes its presence felt by making a sound in its throat, the aspirant ascetic should also hear the Naad in the form of the sound of breath passing through his throat during his meditative trance and realise the presence of the divine Swan representing the supreme Brahm in the form of his Atma residing in his bosom.

The constant reverberation of the Naad makes him like a man in trance who remains unconcerned with and oblivious of the world of sense objects around him. This state results in the de-facto conclusion or elimination of the world without doing any specific Japa of Mantras to achieve this objective.

[That is, if the ascetic has developed enough expertise to remain perpetually engrossed in hearing the subtle sound of the Naad reverberating ceaselessly in his mind and nerves, he feels sedated and tranquilized. The same effect is produced by regular practice of Yoga wherein the practitioner repeats a particular word as designated Mantra prescribed to focus the mind and prevent it from being restless. See also verse no. 10.] (14).

15. All the thoughts processes become subordinated to this symbolic divine Hans/Swan representing the Atma. In other words, the ascetic keeps contemplating upon the Atma residing in his own body (15).

16-17. When a sincere aspirant has repeated the Mantra (So-a-ham, i.e. 'that is me' as described in verse no. 4) ten Koti times (i.e. 100 million times), he is able to witness (i.e. hear the reverberation of) the cosmic Naad. This cosmic resonating vibration has ten sound forms, or cosmic varieties of sound or music emanating from it— (i) clinking of bracelets, (ii) tinkling of anklets, (iii) the deep reverberation and resonating clanging sound of a gong hitting a brass bell, (iv) the sharp blowing of a conch shell, (v) the playing of stringed musical instrument (e.g., lute, harp, guitar), (vi) the clap or clonking sound of crashing cymbals, (vii) the shrill but soothing and haunting sound of a flute, (viii) the beating of tumbrels, (ix) the sound of kettle drums, and (x) the rumbling and thundering of cloud.

The spiritual seeker would hear these sounds in a progressive manner as his meditation moves ahead towards reaching its pinnacle of spiritual accomplishment. The sounds or music are first heard in a mixed cacophony, and then they begin to separate into distinct genres of sound clearly discernible by the aspirant (16).

He should endeavour to forgo the first nine forms of Naad and instead concentrate his attention on the last form, i.e. the thundering and rumbling of clouds (17).

[Note—(1) The various subtle sounds emanating from the cosmic vibration called the Naad have been elaborately described in Naad-Bindu Upanishad of the Rig Veda tradition.

18-20. As a result of the vibrations created by this Naad having ten subtle forms as described above, the body experiences different types of emotional feelings, each feeling being specific to that particular form of Naad. These feelings reveal themselves in the form of various reflexes of the body¹.

The 1st sound creates a tickling sensation. The 2nd sound creates tense or taut muscles leading to spasms. The 3rd sound leads to perspiration breaking out from the body. The 4th sound creates tremors in the head. The 5th sound creates saliva to dribble out of the mouth. The 6th sound causes 'a rain of Amrit' (which is a metaphor for tears of bliss). The 7th sound bestows upon the aspirant the blessing of being acquainted with the profoundest and most secret of knowledge. The 8th sound enables the aspirant to speak in a mystical language. [That is, he can speak in any tongue, he can speak of things unknown, he can speak of the wisest of things, his speech acquires the potent and prowess of possessing divine powers]. The 9th sound enables the aspirant to make himself invisible and he acquires the so-called '3rd eye' having mystical and divine powers of insight and infinite vision. Finally, when the aspirant hears the 10th sound, he acquires the transcendental and eclectic knowledge pertaining to the supreme Brahm, and as a result he experiences or

witnesses the esoteric and sublime presence of the supreme Brahm first hand (18-20).

[Note--¹The reflex actions of the muscles in the body are controlled by the brain. When the nerves of the brain—which is actually an electronic circuit consisting of a fine maze of ganglions, nerve fibers and nerve endings much like an integrated circuit of a computer—are impacted by these sound waves emanating from the cosmic ‘Naad’ which tend to interfere with and modify their working much like the interference of the electronically charged particles of the solar wind with the radio transmission on earth, the impulses or electric signals which are given by the brain to other parts of the body also get effected or modified. This results in the muscles of the body reacting differently to different wavelengths or frequencies of the various sound waves emanating from the sea of sound called the ‘Naad’. Each individual reaction of the body will therefore correspond to particular frequencies or wavelength that the aspirant is hearing at that instant. As a natural corollary, it follows that by observing the reflexes of the aspirant’s body, we can determine at what spiritual level he is prevailing at that moment.]

21. When the mind and the heart dissolve and become one with the indescribable fathomless entity (known as Brahm) and lose their independent identity and existence, then all doubts and confusions, all perplexities and consternations that had existed till the time this did not happen, collapse into their primary source, the Mana (i.e. the emotional as well as thinking mind and the sentimental heart) of the aspirant.

[That is, once the mind and heart cease to exist, there is no scope for the man to make so many resolves, have so many desires, get involved in so many things pertaining to this mundane artificial world. In fact, this world itself ceases to exist because the existence of the world is due to the mind; it is the mind that conceives and then gives this world a shape as well as any importance at all. This is proved by the fact that when we are not interested in anything, or when we are not aware that such and such thing exists, then we are not concerned about it at all. It is only when the mind gets to know about it that it starts thinking about it and getting restless about it.]

Since the mind and heart do not exist, then all the deeds—whether they be good and auspicious, known as ‘Punya’, or bad and inauspicious, known as ‘Paap’ or sinful—cease to matter. With non-involvement in any type of deed, the typical chain of deed-consequence-new deed is disrupted, and the creature is freed from their trap.

Such an exalted and liberated ‘Hans’ or Swan (here referring to the realised and enlightened person) then perpetually lives as a personification of the eternal Shiva (truth, bliss, auspiciousness, wisdom, enlightenment) and his Shakti (divine, mystical and eclectic powers, energy, strength and authority). He becomes so exalted in stature that he becomes synonymous with his Atma and therefore exhibits all the virtues of the latter—such as being all-pervading and omnipresent, being self-illuminated, being pure and incorrupt, being wise, erudite and enlightened, being eternal, perpetual and infinite, being without any faults, flaws, shortcomings and blemishes, being peaceful, tranquil, serene, calm and quiet. Being endowed with these divine,

holy and eclectic qualities, he shines in this world with his radiant, bright and splendorous virtue and glory. This is the assertion of the Vedas.

With this, this Upanishad comes to a conclusion (21).

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SECTION 4

UPANISHADS OF THE KRISHNA YAJUR VEDA

The Shantipaath of the Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda: ‘OM salutations! Oh the supreme, absolute and transcendental Brahm! Protect both of us—the Guru (teacher) as well as the disciple—simultaneously. Give us both your patronage; protect and sustain us together; take care of our welfare and well-being. Let us gain in strength and spiritual energy together. Let the eclectic knowledge that we both acquire become glittering and splendid as well as permanent, sound and unchallengeable so that no one can supersede us in our wisdom, erudition and knowledge; let this holistic knowledge reach its natural climax without any obstacles. Let us be at peace with each other; let us not have any kind of jealousy, malice, envy, hatred etc. against each other. Oh the most majestic and almighty Lord! Let all our three so-called ‘Traitaps’ be calmed down. Let us have peace; let us have peace; let us have peace. [The so-called three ‘Traitaps’ are the torments that the creature is subjected to due to his body such as illness, old age etc.; due to other worldly creatures such as the fear from the king, thieves etc.; and due to the malignant stars and opposed Gods etc.]

This section has the following eleven Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in full or in part that deal with the theme of Yoga: (IV—A) Dhyan Bindu; (IV—B) Brahm Vidya; (IV—C) Yog Kundali; (IV—D) Amrit Nada; (IV—E) Kshuriko; (IV—F) Shwetashwatar (Canto 2); (IV—G) Varaaha, Canto 5; (IV—H) Yog Shikha; (IV—I) Yog Tattva Upanishad; (IV—J) Akchu Upanishad, entire Canto 2; and (IV—K) Tejobindu Upanishad Canto 1, verse nos. 15-19, 25-27, 31-42.

Some of the Upanishads narrated in this section of the book also have other philosophies interwoven in their texts. Since the focus of our current book is on the theme of “Yoga”, hence only those Cantos or parts of the relevant Upanishads are quoted here.

(IV—A) Dhyan Bindu Upanishad

The Dhyan Bindu Upanishad deals with two important concepts of metaphysics—viz. OM and Yoga. It analyses the various components of the divine Mantra OM which is the word representation of the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, and then goes on to describe how it symbolically stands for the entire creation right from its conception, through its various stages of evolution and development, until its final dissolution (verse nos. 1-19). It then advises that Yoga is the best means of attaining the exalted stature of spiritual enlightenment and experiencing the eclectic bliss and beatitude obtainable by self and Brahm realisation. The different components of Yoga are described in this context (verse no. 20-93). This leads the spiritual aspirant to the citadel of self-realisation when he can witness the presence of the cosmic

Consciousness within his own self and obtain Mukti, or spiritual liberation and deliverance (verse nos. 94-106).

To enable this to happen, it is necessary to have diligence, singularity of purpose, steadfastness, persistence, consistence, concentration and focus. These are the qualities which give this Upanishad its name *Dhyan Bindu*. The word 'Dhyan' means to focus one's attention on a single target without getting distracted, and 'Bindu' means a point upon which the aspirant focuses his attention—much like an archer who steadily sees the target to strike the bull's eye with his arrow (verse no. 14-15). This Upanishad therefore extols the importance of 'Dhyan' as a means of self and Brahm realisation. Dhyan is a metaphor for Yoga or meditation and contemplation. It literally refers to the concentration of the stupendous powers of the faculties of the mind to deeply contemplate and fixedly ponder on the great spiritual truths of existence as envisioned by the scriptures to unravel their enigmatic secrets. This is done by fixing the powerful forces of the mind which are aided by the physical contribution of the body in the form of various meditative exercises upon a spot called the 'Bindu', literally the point source of spiritual energy located in the heart as the 'Atma or soul' of the creature, as well as in the symbolic triangle formed at the spot in the forehead between the two eyebrows and the root of the nose. It is from here that the great mystical secrets of existence and creation are known.

This Upanishad prescribes the use of various Yoga techniques to contemplate and meditate upon the various aspects of spiritualism with the objective of unfolding the magnificent treasure of spiritual energy lying hidden inside one's own self and untapped till now. Yoga helps to unleash this astounding mystical power and help the aspirant to witness the cosmic Consciousness within his self as his Atma, leading to self and Brahm realisation, and to the awakening of the universal powers of the Spirit. He experiences profound bliss and ecstasy when he successfully reaches his spiritual goal.

While dealing with Yoga, it describes its different concepts such as Pranayam (breath control), Aasans and Mudras of Yoga (sitting postures), Shadanga Yoga (the following of the six-fold path for spiritual enlightenment and salvation), the various Chakras (subtle energy centers in the body), Prans (vital winds), Hans Vidya (acquisition of truthful knowledge pertaining to universal Spirit that resides in the individual creature's heart in the form of a symbolic Swan or Hans), Kundalini (the coiled dynamic but subtle energy center located at the base of the spine), and Naad (the all-pervading cosmic background cosmic vibrations or sound represented by the word OM).

The eternal metaphysical question 'why does the immaculate and uncorrupt Atma appear to be corrupted and tainted while it lives in a gross body of the creature and interacts with the world' has been explained beautifully in verse nos. 93/1-93/15.

Some of the other relevant Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda are Amrit Naad, Tejobindu, Brahm Vidya, Brahm Bindu, Yogshikha, Yogtattva, Yogkundalini etc.

1. Even if one has accumulated so much sins (over numerous lives) that they resemble a huge mountain extending to many miles, it is still possible to destroy them and overcome their horrendous consequences by following the path of 'Dhyan Yoga'¹ (1).

[Note—¹The word *Dhyan* (pronounced as “Dhyaan”) literally means ‘to think or to cogitate’. It is profound and abstract meditation that revolves around reflection and thoughts that are focused on the Divinity said to be concealed inside the bosom of all the creatures as their pure consciousness that in turn is the supreme cosmic power in creation known as Brahm. Usually the energy of this cosmic Consciousness is lying latent and unused in the own body of the creature simply because it is in a dormant form and un-ignited much like the fire lying dormant in the firewood or coal and needing some prodding to leap back into life with all its glorious potentials and splendour. Dhyan envisages the concentration of the stupendous powers of the faculties of the mind to deeply contemplate and fixedly ponder on the great spiritual truths of creation as envisioned by the scriptures to unravel their enigmatic secrets. This is done by fixing the powerful forces of the mind, which is aided by the physical contribution of the body in this auspicious endeavour in the form of various meditative exercises, onto a spot called the ‘Bindu’, literally the point source of spiritual energy located in the heart as the ‘Atma or soul’ of the creature, as also in the centre of the eyebrows as ‘awareness and enlightenment’, from where the great mystical dynamic powers in creation spring out and spread into the outside world. It envisions the use of various Yoga techniques to contemplate and meditate upon the various aspects of spiritualism with the objective of unfolding the magnificent treasure of spiritual enlightenment and unleashing of the astounding mystical powers that are inherently present in the Atma but were hitherto concealed in it, leading to self and Brahm realisation as well as to the awakening of the universal powers and potentials of the Spirit.

Dhyan means both contemplation as well as meditation. The word also means ‘attention; focus’. So this word is generally understood in common parlance to be similar to contemplation and meditation, concentration and focusing of the conscious mind. It covers both the terms in its ambit.

The appropriate word for contemplation in Sanskrit would be ‘Manan and Chintan’ which will roughly mean ‘deep thought, reflection, pondering and application of mind’. The Upanishads stress on this ‘Chintan-manan’ aspect of the mind-intellect when it talks about ‘Dhyan’. Greatest of scientific discoveries were made more by intuition than anything else. That is why intuition is closely related to the so-called ‘sixth sense’ in a man, i.e. a state when the intuitive man knows what is the correct path to chose from a variety of options, and more often than not, he is correct. We can say that this ‘intuition’ is the guidance provided by the subtle soul/Atma of the creature. Not everybody is equally intuitive by nature; this is because some persons, by virtue of their past actions and deeds have a thicker layer of Vasanas and Vrittis surrounding their Atma while others have a thinner layer so that the voice coming out of the Atma is easily heard in the latter case while it is muzzled and suppressed in the former case.

The great exponent of Yoga, sage Patanjali, in his magnum opus ‘Yogsutra’ has described ‘Dhyan’ as concentration. Dhyan is that state in which the inner mind tries to see the reality behind things. This ‘thinking’ process links it with contemplation while concentration function links it with meditation. According to Agni Puran, contemplation with a calm mind is Dhyan while Garud Puran has defined it as concentration on the Brahm. Dhyan, therefore, leads to enlightenment. Woodworth, in his book ‘Psychology’, writes that the mind concentrates on one impulse at a time and neglects others. So, Dhyan in this context means ‘to become alert and activated for doing a work or seeing an object exclusively’. Dhyan is momentary in the beginning, but it becomes permanent later on with practice. Sidney Smith defines Dhyan as ‘to forget everything else except the main objective’. Charles Dickens views Dhyan as ‘useful, harmless, definite and a beneficial process of the mind’. According to Bergansa, ‘suppression of external distractions is essential for the deepening expansion of Dhyan’. Edgar Casey says that ‘Dhyan brings to

the fore the latent powers of creativity in a person. This creativity improves and enriches his physical, mental and spiritual aspects'. John White in his renowned work 'The meeting of science and spirit' has enumerated many benefits of Dhyān— promotion of physical health, reduction of tension, anxiety and aggressiveness, it leads to self realisation and self improvement and development. He further says that the benefit of meditation are the following—feeling of tranquility, freedom, reduction of tiredness and depression, relief from pains, increase in positive traits such as sympathy and empathy for others, believe in divinity and purity of self etc. Michael Murphy and Steven Donovan, in their research work titled 'The physical and psychological effects of meditation' have mentioned that meditation/Dhyān helps to regulate and control electrical and chemical activity of the brain, the rhythm of the heart, regulates blood pressure, the skin's ability to resist infection and it regulates general metabolism.

The great philosopher sage Sankaracharya has explained that the many Vedic rituals such as sacrifices had been transformed as mental concepts for contemplation and meditation by Chandogya Upanishad because any defect in the performance of a ritual according to the Vedas, however small and inconsequential, could devalue and derail the whole process. Further, elaborate rituals required huge preparation and expenditure. So he prescribed that meditation was far better, safer and surer means of attaining the same benefits that elaborate sacrifices offered. Contemplation and mediation are equally efficient in spiritual pursuit of the aspirant. Nevertheless, the former (contemplation) has intellect and mind as its main focus while the latter (meditation) concentrates on the mind and body to be effective. Sacrifices, as compared to them, are merely physical rituals.

As is evident, the chariot moves in the proper direction when all the horses are controlled simultaneously. So a holistic and an all-inclusive, well synchronised and homogenous approach is needed by a seeker/aspirant to attain success in his endeavour to get liberation and deliverance from the horrible torments agitating him as well as to attain emancipation and salvation for its soul from this world.

The concept of Dhyān has been described in detail in Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 7, section 6 and 18 of the Sam Veda tradition. Refer also to Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 36.]

2. The primary monosyllable word OM represents and incorporates in its ambit the entire gamut of creation—right from its conception and initial stages, to its unfolding and its final conclusion¹. Beyond it is the 'Naad²' (the cosmic background vibrations in ether that resembles the sound made by the distant rumbling of clouds or running of a train). This Naad is visualised as a crescent-shaped moon or concave bowl. The focal point of this crescent-shaped Naad is known as the 'Bindu³'. This is the point or the Bindu where the practitioner of Yoga can hear the cosmic ethereal sound (because it is here that the sound waves originating in the cosmos are focused). This reverberating cosmic sound resonates through the entire being of the aspirant when it is heard by him (during the practice of Yoga or meditation and contemplation), and at a certain point of his practice this resonance reaches such a crescendo that the practitioner's entire being is drowned in its vibrations so much so that he hears nothing else; his entire being is completely submerged and overwhelmed by it⁴.

This is the abstract stage of 'no sound' (because he hears nothing else except this Naad and therefore stays in a state of void as far as the hearing of the numerous sounds that have their origin in this gross world are concerned). This is the state of supreme bliss which is obtained when one rises above the mundane and reaches the citadel of spiritual enlightenment⁵ (2).

[Note—¹The concept of *OM*: Refer also to Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 1, 6. The symbol of this word *OM* resembles the vowel ‘Ooo’ or ‘Uo’ (pronounced as ‘noose’) of the Sanskrit language, with a crescent-shaped moon or a shallow bowl shaped sign on its top such that the hollow end points above. This sign is called the ²*Naad* because it represents the bowl of the cosmos in which the cosmic ether was present. It was in this bowl-shaped container that the primordial cosmic reactions took place leading to the cosmic explosion which provided the energy and created the raw materials from which the rest of the vast visible cosmos evolved and got moulded. Further, a bowl with parabolic shape is able to concentrate beams of sound at a point, called the focal point, where all the energy in the generated sound is concentrated. It would be so great that it might be ear-rupturing if one is not careful. This phenomenon is used to construct music halls with properly controlled acoustics so that echo and resonances do not occur. It is to be noted that in some buildings built to specific acoustic criterions, if one sits at the focal point in it he would be clearly able to hear what is being said even at a distant point of the building.

From the Yoga point of view, the focal point where all the ethereal cosmic sound energy is concentrated is represented by the ³*Bindu* or the dot or the point which is said to be located at the tri-junction formed in the forehead at the midpoint between the eyebrows and the root of the nose. It is here that the practitioner of Yoga focuses his attention to obtain the deep insight into the secrets of creation and existence because it is here that he accesses great mystical powers and potentials.

Iconographically, this *Bindu* is depicted as a ‘dot’ placed on the crescent-shaped or concave sign of *Naad* which is located on the head of the symbol of *OM* in such a way that it dangles in mid air just at the geometrical focal point of this concave surface to indicate the ‘focal point of cosmic energy’. The symbolic depiction of this *Bindu*, *Naad* and *OM* is the following sign.

An example from modern life would easily help to understand this phenomenon. The ‘satellite dish antenna’ which is seen on the roof top of every modern home resembles this *Naad* and *Bindu* apparatus. The parabolic surface of the dish antenna is the crescent shaped bowl on the top of *OM*, and the electronic device called the *SMPS* held at the focal point of this antenna dish to collect the electronic waves transmitted by some remote satellite or television broadcasting station and collected by the parabolic dish to be focused or concentrated at this point is equivalent to the *Bindu* placed on *OM*. The set-top box or the electronic receiver in this setup is the meditator’s brain itself which intercepts and then interprets the electronic signals and converts them into different pictures of the world that the individual sees just like the TV monitor that depicts the images that are collected by the dish antenna.

⁴How the cosmic sound of *Naad* sniffs out all other sounds and virtually drowns the person doing *Dhyan Yoga*, or concentrating his attention during meditation and contemplation can be experienced by even a layman. When one closes one’s ears with the fingers, one hears a deep roaring sound in the ears. This sound resembles the distant roar of the ocean or the rumbling of the cloud or the trundling of the train. No other sound emanating from the outside world is audible now. This is what is meant in this verse here. When the practitioner of Yoga repeats the Mantra *OM* and focuses his attention on the sound components of this divine word, a stage is reached when the cosmic *Naad* represented by *OM* so much resonates in his head that it eliminates all other sounds, and the practitioner’s nerves begin to vibrate with its resonance just like the tuning fork or the strings of a musical instrument that begin to vibrate when they are struck. This reverberating sound kind of massages the nerves and makes them numb to all other sounds as well as impulses. This is the state of blissfulness and ecstasy because the aspirant feels not only calmed down but also titillated. This makes him oblivious of all

pain and worries of this mundane life; all the torments of the world are forgotten and dumped. This is also like a tired man who is sleeping soundly when he is completely immune to all sounds and all thoughts that were ruffling his senses while he was awake, making him rested and rejuvenated when he wakes up from his sleep.

⁵That is, all his sensory perceptions are dulled and numbed to the extent that he hears nothing. This is not some hypothetical imagination of the fertile mind, as even modern science has established that the ear of different animal species can hear different sounds depending upon their wave lengths and frequencies. Sound outside certain fixed acoustic limits is not heard by humans but can be heard by other animals, say for example dogs, cats, bats and birds. In the present case, the reverberations of Naad make all the sensory nerves in the brain numb to the extent that they become oblivious to all sorts of impulses impinging on the mind's sense receptors.

Yoga Upanishad assert that the ascetic is able to hear the Naad when his Kundalini is activated and the vital winds forces of life present inside the body are controlled. At the same time as experiencing the dripping of nectar of extreme bliss and ecstasy, called the Bindu, the Yoga practitioner would also hear the Naad which is a subtle roar of the vibration present in the cosmic ether that is now reverberating in his entire inner being. This happens because the body has the subtle sky element present inside it as much as the presence of this element outside of it. This Naad resembles a roar of the ocean, or the rumbling of clouds, or a train trundling away in a distance. In fact, Naad more closely resembles the roar of a fiercely burning fire—which is symbolic of the fact that the subtle fire element which was hitherto dormant and only smoldering inside the body of the practitioner has now been kindled and activated by the practice of Yoga and its attendant activation of the Kundalini by stoking it with the powerful vital winds such as Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyana and Udaana. Thus, the cosmic dynamic energy that is inherently present in the body of all living beings, but unfortunately had become dormant and inactive, is now re-ignited into its finest form. The Naad is therefore the sound of the raging fire element present inside the body. So when a practitioner of Yoga hears the Naad he feels certain that his Kundalini as well as the latent energy of his body has been activated and the internal fire is burning vigorously. The Varaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 5, verse no. 52 mentions how this Naad is heard and the dripping of Bindu experienced by the practitioner of Yoga when his Kundalini is activated. Refer also Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Brahmin 2, section 2, verse no. 2. The Hamsa Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 16-17 describes the sound emanating from this Naad, while its verse nos. 18-20 describes its effect on the body.

The word *Bindu* literally means a drop of some liquid, for instance a drop of nectar. At an advanced stage of Yoga when the practitioner is able to activate the Kundalini, control his vital winds and successfully implement other aids of Yoga such as correctly and persistently doing various Asanas, Mudras and Bandhas for a prolonged period, he would automatically experience rewards inherent to the practice of Yoga. Therefore, he would experience extreme bliss and ecstasy that would appear to drip upon his inner self and overwhelm him. His mind and heart would be submerged in enjoying this nectar that would drip drop by drop like honey effusing from a ripe and full honeycomb. This concept of Bindu in association with Naad has been used to name a special Upanishad called the 'Naad Bindu' Upanishad. Other Upanishads also deal with this subject, e.g. Amrit Bindu and Amrit Naad Upanishads etc.

There are other Upanishads which describe the concept of Naad in detail, such as for example Yogchudamani of Sam Veda, Brahm Vidya and Ekakshar of Krishna Yajur Veda amongst others.]

3. This apparently self-created cosmic sound is called 'Anaahat'¹ (so called because it was generated on its own without any cause such as two entities striking one another which is the usual cause of generation of sound in this world; it resembles the distant rumbling of clouds or a train trundling along on its track).

There is an entity which transcends this plane and exists beyond it, and it is on its inspiration that this Anaahat sound is generated in the ether of the cosmos. 'That' supreme, self-existent, non-describable and transcendental Authority is known as Brahm. When the ascetic (i.e. the practitioner of meditation and contemplation) is able to have access to this Brahm, the ultimate frontier of spiritual endeavours so to say, nothing remains to be known, nothing remains to be accessed (3).

[Note--¹ The word 'Anahat Naad' refers to the apparently self-created cosmic sound called 'Naad'. It is called 'Anahat' (pronounced as "Anaa-hut") because it was generated on its own without any apparent cause such as striking of two entities with one another which is the usual cause of generation of sound in this world. It resembles the distant rumbling of clouds or a train trundling along on its track. The Naad Bindu Upanishad of the Rig Veda tradition describes this Naad in great detail.

From the point of view of genesis according to the Tantra Shastra which believes that everything in existence originated from Shiva and Shakti (the cosmic male and female elements), a very interesting depiction is given as to how the cosmic Naad came into being and how the rest of creation was revealed from it. Its basic scene is as follows-- According to the philosophy of Tantra Shastra dedicated to the worship of divinity in the form of Shiva and Shakti, the process of creation took the following initial steps. Before anything came into being, Brahm, the supreme consciousness and the ultimate truth of creation, known as Shiva, was established in his own radiant effulgence or self-illumination symbolising his splendorous glory, majesty and divinity. Hence he was called 'Prakash', literally meaning light. When he decided to deliberate and actually started the process of deliberation in order to start the process of creation, there was a subtle 'spandan' or a slight throb or imperceptible movement which transformed into a vibration. The waves generated by this initial vibration developed in the cosmic ether and gradually coalesced with each other to give rise to higher waves of higher amplitudes. This produced the cosmic sound called the Naad. Since the creation was conceived in the bowl of the cosmic ether, the energy of the initial sound was focused at a central point, called the focal point or the dot or 'Bindu'. This Bindu contained the combined powers of both the male Shiva and the female Shakti like a dicotyledonous seed which produced the two separate entities called Shiva and Shakti. The union of these two resulted in the unfolding of the rest of the creation. Thus it will be observed that whatever exists in this creation can be traced back to this primeval Naad. Hence, the latter is called 'Shabda Brahm', or the Brahm as sound. Therefore it is very natural to assume that all Mantras dedicated to any divine entity and consisting of the sound element (because Mantra consist of letters and words, and are chanted or repeated to make them effective) has its origin in this Shabda Brahm and gets its powers and energy from this Shabda Brahm. In other words, the Mantra contains in itself the essential meaning, form and spirit of the deity whose Mantra it is and which is being worshipped and invoked. Constant repetition of the Mantra generates so much energy in due course of time that the deity being worshipped is revealed. This is because the sound has great powers and energy as is evident when reverberation of sound waves and the resonance created by them are so powerful and forceful that they can shatter sheet glass in windows when an explosion occurs near a building.

Thus we observe that the Naad is the ethereal background reverberating sound energy in Nature which is said to be the primary source of energy that provided the vital spark to

set off the chain reaction in the primordial cosmic gel from which the rest of the creation eventually evolved. The Naad has been envisioned in the form of waves in the cosmic ether, the waves which overlapped and coalesced with each other to generate sufficient energy that produces sound which traveled in the sky and was heard by ancient sages and seers who devised the word OM to capture its fundamental tones and notes in the constituent letters or syllables of this OM. Since the primordial cosmic gel was a neutral and static entity, this energy of sound waves was the first to create some sort of activity in it—like subtly and imperceptibly stirring it from within. This energy multiplies itself manifold and in due course of time the different elements separated from one another, the heavier ones settling at the bottom and the lighter ones going upwards to float on the surface. This is how basically the earth and other elements such as the water and air took up their places in creation, with the heavier earth solidifying at the lower level and the lighter water floating on its outer surface and the air going still higher into the space of the sky. The fire element however remained trapped in the bowls of the earth as the world gradually crystallized into its present shape.

Since the Atma is the only conscious factor in creation showing basic elements of the existence of conscious life in any of its myriad forms, and the Naad is also the first sign of creative primary subtle activity in the cosmos that ultimately led to the unfolding of this incomprehensibly vast and miraculous creation, it naturally follows that the Atma, the fundamental essence of life, or the soul of all that exists as truthful life forms in Nature, and the Naad, the primary source from which the entire creation is said to have evolved, are synonymous with each other. This fact has been endorsed by Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse 3 which says that the Atma is synonymous with the Naad.]

4. If the tip of the hair is split into one hundred thousand parts (then one such part would be called the Jiva—the living being in the cosmic scheme of things), if one such part is then again split into one hundred thousand parts (then one such resultant part would be equivalent to the symbolic dimension of the Ishwar or the Lord of creation who is subtler, lighter and finer than the creature who is much grosser, heavier and denser than Ishwar), and if one such part is further split into fifty thousand parts then a situation is reached when no further divisions are feasible and no measurements can be made of the resultant entity. It is the finest of the fine, the most micro-fine entity in existence, and most microscopic of all those things so fine and microscopic that they cannot be measured or qualified. This entity is the symbolic form and subtle existential nature of the ultimate supreme Authority in creation which has no quantifiable attributes and definable qualities that can ever taint its immaculate nature and form. In other words, it is metaphorically fine and pure even at the atomic and the sub-atomic levels also; nothing can corrupt it; nothing can taint it (4).

5-6. Even as sweet fragrance is an integral part of the flower, butter is inherently present in pure and un-skimmed milk, oil is imperceptibly present in seeds, and gold is present in the ore of the gold mines located in the deep bosom of the earth, though none of these entities are visible to the naked eyes, the existence of the Atma (pure consciousness) in all living beings too is an unequivocal and irrefutable truth which cannot be denied though this Atma is not visible to the naked eye (like the gross body which is visible).

Those who are of a stable mind and intellect, being wise, erudite and enlightened about the truthful essence of Brahm (i.e. who understand that whatever spiritually important or valuable entity that exist in this creation is nothing but consciousness, that

this consciousness is Brahm personified, and that it permeates uniformly and universally in the entire creation so much so that if it is removed from the latter, nothing of substance is left behind), realise that this Atma is like the concealed thread which holds the beads of this world-like rosary or garland together in their place and prevents their scattering about¹.

Thus, the wise ascetic realises the universality of the Atma and its omnipresent and all-pervading nature much like that of Brahm (i.e. he treats the Atma with the same spiritual value as that possessed by Brahm)² (5-6).

[Note--¹That is, had there been no consciousness in this world, there would have been no signs of life on this planet. Earth without life would be a barren stretch of land. There are uncountable number of species of living beings—both mobile such as the members of the animal kingdom, and the immobile such as the member of the plant kingdom. No two members or samples have identical bodies or genes. But the common denominator that binds them together is the factor of 'life'. All living beings are so called because they have 'life' which is a metaphor for Pran and consciousness. This universal and all-pervading factor is called Brahm.

But merely being alive does not make the creature a 'true personification' of Brahm because the latter has certain eclectic virtues characteristic to it—such as being noble, auspicious, righteous, wise, sagacious, enlightened and all-knowing. So being 'conscientious', *inter alia*, is also necessary to be fully and truly a personification of Brahm. Had the creatures no sense of 'conscience' in them, the fabric of morality would have fallen apart and become tattered; all the forms of noble and civilized way of life would cease to exist, and the entire world would become one big forest filled with wild animals that have no conscience in them though each one of them is alive and have a soul.

²A wise person sees the hidden Atma or pure consciousness that prevails uniformly and universally in everything living as the true manifestation of Brahm rather than seeing Brahm only in the external façade of this world. This highly eclectic, most enlightened and metaphysically evolved view of 'what is Brahm' would also address the doubts that one might have in one's mind when he considers the doctrine expounded in the Upanishads that says on the one hand that this world is falsehood and deluding, while saying on the other hand that it is a manifestation of Brahm. Does this mean that Brahm is false and deluding? Or does it mean that this statement that the entire world is a manifestation of Brahm is itself wrong? None of it—for a wise man sees Brahm not in the external features of the world but in the Atma that lives in this world. The external body of the world is the habitat of the Atma just like a man has a house to live in. For all practical purposes, the address of the house becomes the man's location and it helps to identify him in a cluster of similar houses; it becomes his *de facto* identity. The house is identified with the person living inside it—we say that this house is John's or Smith's. Similarly, the world becomes one with Brahm because the latter is a resident of this world as the Atma; this world was conceived and built by Brahm, and it belongs to him and no body else.

A Brahm-realised man finds a firm foothold and gets established in this knowledge when he realises this fundamental truth. Then he would not have to search Brahm anywhere else, and neither would he be misled by fake identities going by the name of Brahm, for then he would be wise enough to expose such imposters. When one has found what he is searching or has set out to achieve, it is obvious that he would find peace and rest of mind.

This phrase 'finding firm foothold and getting established' can be understood in another way also. When one puts his foot on some new ground—such as the man's

landing on the surface of the moon—he would feel the ground under his feet, whether it is solid and hard enough to support him, or whether it is slippery and soft like swampy bog that would just swallow him up if he puts his entire weight on it. So, when the spiritual aspirant has had firm knowledge of Brahm and the Atma, he becomes rest assured that he has indeed found the ultimate Truth of existence, and this is ‘solid ground’ upon which he can rest and find his final peace. In other words, when a wise and enlightened man has witnessed the presence of the pure consciousness upon successful completion of Yoga as described in the verses of this Upanishad, he would have found his peace and bliss that is permanent and eternal. This is metaphorically said by asserting that he has found a firm foothold and got established.]

7. Even as oil is imperceptibly but integrally present in the oil-bearing seeds of the sesame plant, and fragrance or aroma are inseparable part of the flower, the Atma is also present in an inexplicable but unequivocal form in the body of all living creatures in this creation as their pure consciousness which prevails inside this body as well as the cosmic Spirit that prevails outside their bodies. This Atma is the same both inside as well as outside the gross body, and it is the true identity of all living creatures¹ (7).

[Note—¹This concept can be easily visualised by imagining a clay pitcher filled with water and dipped in an ocean. It is obvious that the water inside the body of the pitcher and outside of it is the same. The Atma present inside the gross body of the creature is like the water inside the pitcher, and the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm is like the ocean present outside the pitcher. Suppose the clay pitcher is broken while it is still submerged in the ocean water—what would happen? The water inside the pitcher would imperceptible and automatically merge with the water of the ocean even without leaving a trace and with no fuss. In fact, it is not even possible to keep these two waters separate once the pitcher is broken. This is what is called ‘Kaivalya Mukti’ in the language of Yoga (verse no. 103-106 of the present Dhyani Bindu Upanishad; and Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 4, verse nos. 7 and 15 for instance), or ‘Videha Mukti’ in the metaphysical parlance (e.g. Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 33-81; Sarwasaro-panishad, verse no. 2; Akchu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 32-40). It envisages that the spiritual aspirant would be able to shed his mortal gross body and merge his ‘self’, which is the pure conscious Atma, with the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm that is present everywhere in existence.]

8. Just like a huge tree has a physical gross form which is most vibrant and colourful, being liberally endowed with green branches of various sizes and shapes, and laden with tender green leaves, beautiful aromatic flowers and succulent ripe fruits, but its shadow is only a silhouette of this magnificent tree, being a lifeless, colourless and dull neutral outline of the original tree and having none of its vibrant and colourful charms, the Atma is also present like the shadow (of the original cosmic Consciousness) cast across the length and width of this creation. Again, even as the shadow does not distinguish between the object over which it falls, the Atma too has no preferences for its existence in any particular form of the body of the creature¹ (8).

[Note--¹That is, even as the shadow uniformly falls upon the ground below the tree, whether it is smooth or rough, whether it is dry or wet, whether a holy man is meditating in its cover or someone is planning a crime sitting under the tree, whether there are chirping birds or colourful flowers or fragrant fruits on the tree or not, the Atma is universally and uniformly present in the creation notwithstanding the auspiciousness or otherwise of the latter. Even as the shadow is not at all affected, influenced or tainted by

the nature of the ground or the object upon which it falls, the Atma too remains completely immune to any of the tainting affects or degrading influences of this materialistic and deluding world in which it lives.]

9-13. [Verse nos. 9-13 describe the different mystical interpretations of the three letters that constitute the divine ethereal word OM to emphasise the point that everything in existence has its origin in one single-point source of cosmic proportions, and it is known as Brahm or Pranav. It is from this Brahm that this vast, multifarious and colourful creation has sprouted, unfolded and spread out like the petals of a lotus flower or the rays of the sun radiating out from one single source. When the time comes, they would converge into that one single point from which they had branched out in the beginning. The Brahm Vidya Upanishad expounds upon the various metaphysical connotations of the different components of the ethereal word OM in its verse nos. 2-12.]

The supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm is represented by the monosyllabic ethereal word OM. This Brahm has always been the aim (destination; objective) of all those who seek emancipation and salvation for themselves. OM is the all-encompassing and all-incorporating monosyllabic word representing that Brahm. [In other words, the profound glory and astounding greatness of Brahm can be metaphorically understood if one understands the divine sublimity and greatness, the mystical meaning and the magnificent spiritual import of this single ethereal word OM.]

The first letter 'A' of the divine, ethereal, cosmic word OM is deemed to include and encompass in its reach and import the earth, the fire, the Rig Veda, the Vyahriti 'Bhu' (which is the first primary word pronounced by the creator Brahma at the beginning of creation), and Brahma himself. They form an integral and inseparable part of OM representing the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Divinity in creation, just like the letter 'A' without which the word OM cannot be existent. The letter 'A' represents the basis of creation, the foundation of creation. At the time of conclusion of the creation, these five primary aspects of creation (viz. earth, fire, Rig Veda, Bhu and Brahma) would withdraw and take rest in the first component of OM. [In other words, the letter 'A' of the three-lettered word OM represents the 'initiation and unfolding of the creation' as all these entities listed in this paragraph are the symbolic bricks upon which the entire edifice of this visible conscious world have been founded.]

The second letter 'U' of the divine, ethereal, cosmic word OM is deemed to include and encompass in its reach and import the Antariksha (the sky above the surface of the earth), the Yajur Veda, the wind or air element, the Vyahriti 'Bhuvaha' (which is the second primary word pronounced by the creator Brahma at the beginning of creation), and the sustainer and protector of creation, Lord Vishnu. They form an integral and inseparable part of OM representing the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Divinity in creation, just like the letter 'U' without which the word OM cannot be existent. The letter 'U' represents the middle part of the creation, viz. its development, growth and spread. At the time of conclusion of the creation, these five primary aspects of creation (viz. sky, air, Yajur Veda, Bhuvaha and Vishnu) would withdraw and take rest in the second component of OM. [In other words, the letter 'U' of the three-lettered word OM represents the 'development, growth and spread of creation' earlier initiated by the letter A. This is because when we pronounce the letter 'U' we cup our lips to resemble the shape of the electric loudspeaker or a sound amplifier which is a metaphoric way of announcing that life has indeed come into being and it is spreading its wings. This letter

‘U’ virtually proclaims to the world that the supreme creator has already launched the world in the form of the letter ‘A’, and it is now evolving and developing continuously. Since the entire creation has the genes of Brahm in it in the form of the Atma or pure consciousness, it follows that ‘U’ announces that the Lord is living here amongst us and no one need to search him anywhere else but in ‘U’. There is an interesting twist to this symbolism. When the letter ‘U’ is pronounced, it indicates the spiritual aspirant himself because it is similar in sound to the word ‘you’—i.e. Brahm is ‘you’! Incidentally, this is also one of the great sayings of the Vedas—‘Twam-Brahmasi’—thou art Brahm (refer Paingalo-panishad, 3/2 of the Shukla Yajur Veda).

The third letter ‘M’ of the divine, ethereal, cosmic word OM is deemed to include and encompass in its reach and import the Du-loka (the heavens; the deep recesses of the cosmos), the Sun, the Sam Veda, the Vyahriti ‘Swaha’ (which is the third primary word pronounced by the creator Brahma at the beginning of creation), and the concluder of creation known as Maheshwar (i.e. Lord Shiva, the great Ishwar or Lord). They form an integral and inseparable part of OM representing the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Divinity in creation, just like the letter ‘M’ without which the word OM cannot be existent. The letter ‘M’ represents the concluding part of the creation when what had emerged at the beginning of creation and is symbolically represented by the letter ‘A’, had then subsequently evolved, developed and spread in the form of this myriad colourful world as represented by the word ‘U’, would eventually come to rest as represented by this third letter ‘M’. At the time of conclusion of the creation, these five primary aspects of creation (viz. heavens or the vast fathomless cosmos, the splendid and bright sun, the Sam Veda, Swaha and even the Lord of this concluding phase of creation, i.e. Lord Shiva or Maheshwar) would withdraw and take rest in the third component of OM. [In other words, the letter ‘M’ of the three-lettered word OM represents the ‘conclusion and final rest of creation’ whose earlier initiation is represented by the letter A, and development by the letter U. This is because when we pronounce the letter M, we have to close our mouth, and this is indicative of ‘taking rest and withdrawing one’s external existence within one’s own self’. The letter ‘M’ symbolises silence because we have to close our mouth (lips) when we pronounce it. So, if the word OM represents the entire gamut of creation starting from its very beginning that is represented by the letter ‘A’ which can only be pronounced by opening the mouth symbolising life as only living beings speak and not dead entities, followed by its growth and spread as indicated by the second letter ‘U’, then it is very obvious that its conclusion or end would be best depicted by ‘M’ and no other letter because ‘M’ is the only letter which requires the closing of the mouth symbolising death or end.]

The first letter ‘A’ is symbolically of a yellow colour and represents the predominance of the ‘Raja Guna’ in this creation. The second letter ‘U’ is symbolically of a white or grey hue and represents the predominance of ‘Sata Guna’ in this creation. Finally, the third letter ‘M’ is symbolically of a dark colour and represents the predominance of the ‘Tama Guna’ in predominance¹.

In this way, the divine, ethereal and sublime word OM has eight parts or facets², four legs³, three eyes⁴, and five patron deities or Gods called the Devtas⁵ (9-13).

[Note—¹The three Gunas are the basic characteristics present in this creation in various proportions that decide the character traits and qualities of all the creatures in existence. *Raja Guna* is the quality and virtue that favours creation, and therefore the letter ‘A’ has been depicted to have this Guna. The colour yellow is the symbolic colour for any

auspicious and constructive activity such as the initiation of the cosmos and the exercise of creation of the tangible, visible and colourful world. Yellow is the colour of fire and energy which were needed to kick-start the cosmic process of creation.

Similarly, the *Sata Guna* is considered as the best of all qualities which enable the creature to perform his duties in a selfless and non-attached manner. Its representative colour is white. White is the colour of the sunlight from which all other shades of colour, viz. violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red have come into being. White is the colour of purity and immaculacy of the highest degree, and it indicates non-involvement and selflessness. In other words, once the creation has come into being, it is expected that the creature should perform all his destined duties diligently and faithfully, but remain totally detached from them and emotionally non-involved with them. This would ensure that he remains as pure as the colour 'white' which is the colour of purity and immaculacy. The creature, in order to retain his pristine pure form as the pure conscious Soul representing the supreme Brahm, should remain as untainted, untarnished and without a speck on his character as the pristine pure colour 'white'.

The third quality is *Tama Guna* which is the lowest form of these three Gunas in creation, and it is a symbol of ignorance and darkness. It represents 'sleep' in the sense that during sleep a man is unaware of what is happening outside, i.e. he remains ignorant and oblivious of everything happening around him though he might be physically present in that place. In other words, a man with a predominance of Tama Guna would not know what actually the truth is behind the façade of falsehood and delusions. Since ignorance of the reality is tantamount to 'darkness', the colour of Tama Guna is also dark. In the present context it means that when the creature dies, he thinks that his 'life has come to an end', which is a misnomer and not the reality. The life of the soul never comes to an end, and the soul is the true 'self' of the creature, and not his body which has died. Besides this, at the time of this apparent 'death', what actually has happened is that all the elements of creation have simply retracted into their primary source, the supreme Brahm, from where they would re-emerge at the appropriate time. This creation and its life is like a pendulum or a bouncing ball—for it continues to oscillate to and fro unless it is purposefully stopped. This is exactly the aim of spiritual endeavour—to first make the creature wiser about the facts and then telling him how to stop this oscillation of taking a birth and dying only to be reborn again, and stop getting entangled in worldly delusions and its horrific consequences.

This cycle of birth and death is metaphorically depicted by repeating the Mantra OM wherein the mouth has to be repeatedly opened and closed. The final emancipation and salvation is symbolised by being silent when the aspirant is so engrossed in meditation that he is not even aware that he has to repeat the Mantra—i.e. when his mouth is closed for good after the last time he had pronounced OM. This is the eclectic state of Samadhi or the Turiya state; it is tantamount to being freed from the fetters that shackle a creature to this world of material objects. When this becomes permanent, it is the Turiyateet state. It is marked by complete internal silence just like the one that prevails in the deep recesses of the cosmos. It is then that the entire being of the spiritual aspirant is filled with the vibrations of Naad because the latter fills the space of the cosmos where there is no other noise, where there is profound and deep silence. This is the successful culmination of Yoga when the dissolution of the consciousness is complete. Refer Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 15, 22, and verse nos. 103-106 of the present Dhyana Bindu Upanishad.

²The *eight parts or facets of OM* are the following—the letters A, U, M, Naad, Bindu, Kalaa, Kalaa-teet and Param.

Now let us briefly examine what each of these facets mean. The metaphysical importance and spiritual significance of the three letters A, U and M have been explained

in verse no. 9-13 above, while the concept of Naad and Bindu have already been explained in detail in verse no. 2 and its note earlier in this Upanishad.

The word 'Kalaa' means the various subtle qualities that are present in all the creatures of the visible creation in varying proportions. There are variously said to be sixteen, eight, five or three in number, and collectively determine the behavioral patterns and thought processes of all the creatures. Brahm is said to have sixty four Kalaas that encompass all imaginable connotations of the existential world. The word also relates to the changing shapes of the moon and is used in the context of OM to indicate the changing frequencies and tone of sound that resonates in the cosmos, starting from a low level to rise and reach a crescendo and then gradually subsiding to a low murmur and finally stopping altogether, only to remerge after some time—the symbolic representation of the evolution and conclusion of the creation.

Now let us examine these Kalaas in all their possible nuances. (a) *The 16 Kalaas of a man*—In the context of the man, the word Kalaa represents the special qualities, art, craft, skills, expertise, attributes etc. that one must possess if he were to successfully reach his target in life. These different qualities and virtues present in a man symbolically make him perfect; they represent his various strengths and potentials, and they are said to be sixteen in number corresponding to and symbolised by the sixteen phases of the moon. Since a man is an exact replica of the 'Viraat Purush', who in turn is a subtle manifestation of the sublime Brahm, these sixteen qualities or attributes of a man refer to the sixteen qualities of Brahm himself that made him the Lord of creation. The presence of all these divine attributes makes a man complete and very powerful. Hence, these sixteen Kalaas represent all the magnificent good qualities that are present in this creation which enable a man to overcome all adversities, hurdles and ill circumstances. Since Brahm is the creature's only sincere well wisher and succour in times of distress and dismay, and since Brahm possesses all the exemplary qualities grouped under the single word Kalaa, a man who is blessed with them is regarded as being equivalent to Brahm. Or in other words, he personifies Brahm with all his dignified virtues that are needed by a man to complete and get across the cycle of birth and death without hurdles.

These sixteen Kalaas of creation that are present in a man refer to the sixteen elements or primary components that form the basis of a man's very existence and his nature and temperament. These are the fundamental building blocks of his subtle and gross body, its characteristic qualities as well as the world surrounding him and how the man lives in and interacts with it.

These sixteen Kalaas or aspects of creation are the following—(i) Shraddha (faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect, devotion), (ii) Pran (life; the very essence of creation; the vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), (iii) Akash (the all-pervading, all-encompassing sky or space element), (iv) Vayu (wind, air element), (v) Tej (energy, splendour, radiance, glory, might, majesty and fire element), (vi) Apaha (water element which is the all-important ingredient for life), (vii) Prithivi (earth element which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation), (viii) Indriya (the organs of the body, both the organs of perception as well as of action), (ix) Mana (the mind and heart complex and their stupendous potentials), (x) Anna (food, the element without which life is simply not imaginable because it provides it with the basic nourishment and energy), (xi) Virya (semen, sperms, standing for courage, valour, potency, vitality and prowess), (xii) Tapa (austerity and penance, tolerance of hardship as a means of penitence, forbearance as well as carrying out strict religious vows in order to purify one's self) (xiii) Mantra (the key or formula to achieve success in any enterprise; it also refers to the ability to give good advise; the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, and then logically arrive at a conclusion), (xiv) Karma (taking actions and doing deeds), (xv) Loka (worldly interactions, conduct and behaviour), and

(xvi) Naam (good name, fame, reputation, honour and glory).Reference—Chandogya Upanishad, 6/7/1-6 of Sam Veda tradition.

In simple terms it means that a person's total composite personality, his characteristic attributes and individuality, his vitality and stamina, his prowess, powers and strength, his drive and vigour et al can be divided into sixteen parts.

The Kalisantarana Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 2 says that these sixteen Kalaas are like sheaths or veils covering the Atma or 'self' of the man, and he can realise this glorious divinity residing in his bosom only when these Kalaas which are like impediments or hurdles in self and Brahm realisation are removed. When this Upanishad describes them as 'hurdles or impediments' in realising the glory of the 'self' it implies that although all these sixteen qualities are related to achieving glory and majesty in the world, they have nothing to do with 'self-realisation' and 'Brahm-realisation' which is possible only by abandoning everything related to this world as well as the body both in its gross part and its subtle part.

(b) *The 8 Kalaas of a man*—The eight Kalaa of a man are the eight characteristic features by which all men are classified in this world. All men are classified into one or the other type depending on one or more of these eight attributes. These eight apparent criterions used for classification of all humans are the following—his name, caste, complexion, birth or family, race, nationality, Ashram (one of the four phases in life, such as Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vaanprastha and Sanyas), and Varna (class of society such as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra and Nishad or Chandala). [Ref. Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 25 of Krishna Yajur Veda.]

(c) *The 5 Kalaas of a man*—From the metaphysical point of view, the five Kalaas in a man are the following sheaths that surround his Atma or pure consciousness—the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath, the Pran Maye Kosh or the vital wind or air sheath, the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath, the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath, and the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. These sheaths cover the Atma and determine the Atma's temperament, nature, inclinations and behavioral patterns in this world.

(d) *The 5 Kalaas of Pran*—There is another connotation of the phrase five Kalaas of a man in the context of the word Pran. Hence, there are *five Kalaas of the Pran*. The Pran is the vital wind or air element that sustains life in a man. The chief form of this air element that sustains life in the body is called 'Pran', and the term is usually applied to the breath. But besides this, there are four other types of main Prans such as Apaana, Samaana, Udaana and Vyana. These are the names given to the vital wind in order to distinguish between the various functions or roles that it performs inside the body in order to study this air or wind element in a comprehensive way just like we classify any given subject into various streams to facilitate study and analysis. Therefore, hypothetically, the Pran is divided into five main Kalaas. Thus, there is the main Pran and its four Kalaas as follows—(i) The 'Pran' is the wind element which, as breath, is exhaled as well as inhaled and is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without life no other wind would be of any significance to the creature. (ii) The 'Apaana' is the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys). (iii) The 'Samaana' is the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood. (iv) The 'Udaana' is the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough. (v) And finally the 'Vyana' is the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

(e) *The 3 Kalaas of a man*—Besides the above, some humans are said to possess three other special qualities which make certain people very unique and different from others. These are the following:—(i) *Atishaayani Kalaa*—this enables a person to successfully accomplish certain tasks very quickly and in a very short period of time which would be unthinkable to be completed even in the entire lifetime by an ordinary man. Such people are born prodigies and are said to be gifted with certain eclectic qualities and characters that are not normal. For example, the *Adi Shankacharya*, the great philosopher and exponent of *Advaitya Vedanta* and the person who had written matchless and unbeatable commentaries on the principle Upanishads besides establishing the four great pilgrim sites in the four corners of India, had completed in a young age of just ten-twelve years what would take an entire life to do. (ii) *Viprinaamini Kalaa*—this entitles the man to acquire the eight mystical powers called the *Siddhis* (such as *Anima*, *Garima*, *Mahima*, *Laghima*, *Praapti*, *Praakramye*, *Ishwatwa* and *Vashistha*) and show magical powers to become small or big, light or heavy, or even enter the body of another person or assume any shape or form he wants. (iii) *Sankaamini Kalaa*—this enables a person to transfer and install his own stupendous divine and mystical powers in another person and the second person can perform deeds that he would not be able to do himself and is even stunned at his own achievements. We have the example of this in *Swami Vivekanand* in whom his Guru revered *Ramkrishna* had established some divine spark which enabled the great swami to leave an indelible mark on the pages of history and religion by his landmark achievements and conquering the world by his speeches in America where he established the foundation of *Vedanta*.

(f) *The 8 Kalaas of the Gods*—The eight Kalaas of the Gods and their incarnations or manifestations—Since there are said to be a total of sixteen Kalaas and the ordinary man can possess the maximum of these five Kalaas with those who are especially gifted having an additional three as narrated above (bringing the total Kalaas possessed by human beings to $5 + 3 = 8$), the remaining eight ($16 - 8$) belong to the Gods or their incarnations or manifestations. These are the following:—(i) *Prabhvi*—this is that magical and divine power possessed by the entity that enables it to make possible things that are impossible. For example we have the manifestation of *Lord Narsingh* (half man and half lion incarnation of *Lord Vishnu* from a stone pillar to protect his devotee *Prahalad* from being killed by his own demon father). (ii) *Kunthini*—this enables the entity to neutralize the any of the effects of the five elements of creation, including their bad effects. For example we have *Lord Shiva* who drunk the horrible poison called *Halaahal* that emerged as a result of the churning of the ocean without letting that corroding and very potent poison from harming him. (iii) *Vikaasini Kalaa*—the ability to develop, grow, expand or increase to any size, in any form and in any way one wishes. For example we have *Lord Vaaman*, the dwarf mendicant, who had measured the entire world in his three steps. (iv) *Maryaadini*—this is the character, attribute or quality which forces the God-head to observe and exhibit exemplary virtues of righteousness, probity and propriety inspite of his ability of doing anything it wants. It virtually ties him down or restricts him to following a strict and exemplary code of conduct that he successfully implements; these codes are difficult even for the Gods to implement. For example we have *Lord Ram* who led an exemplary life of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety as well as observe all the character traits and attributes that are so common with all the human beings inspite of the fact that he was an incarnation of *Lord Vishnu*, the almighty, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and all-incorporating *Viraat Purush* who is a manifestation of the Supreme Being. (v) *Sanghridini*—this enables the God-head to supersede or overrule the laws of Nature and perform miracles that even defy its laws. For example, *Lord Krishna* had created flowers and fruits even without season. (vi) *Aalhaadini Kalaa*—this enables one to physically remain away but spiritually be

constantly near one's object of devotion or contemplation and serve him or her. This is the way Radha was able to enchant Lord Krishna in spite of not remaining with him at all times. (vii) Paripurna—this word itself implies something that is wholesome and complete in all respects. It can therefore exhibit all the sixteen qualities or Kalaas in one go, or is the entity that embodies all these qualities in its self. Amongst the incarnations of Lord Vishnu, Ram and Krishna are said to be Paripurna. The supreme Brahman is 'Paripurna' because nothing is missing from him; it is wholesome and complete. And finally, (viii) Swarupaa-wasthiti—this means the ability to withdraw or collect all the Kalaas exhibited by an entity and revert to its original and primary form when it is so wished by it. For example, at the end of the Dwapar Yuga, Lord Krishna had withdrawn all his Kalaas into himself before bringing to close his sojourn on this earth.

(g) The *Kalaas in other creatures*—Now we come to other creatures who are neither humans nor Gods. The living world consists of both the animals as well as the plants. The basic life forms have one or two Kalaas to start with, and then it progresses to the level of humans and Gods having five and more Kalaas. The creatures in the living world have been classified into four categories and their respective Kalaas are as follows—(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kalaa called Anna Maye Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swadej—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Kalaas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Kalaas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kalaa refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jaraayuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Kalaas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. The last Kalaa refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Kalaas. Besides the four Kalaas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.

(h) The *16 Kalaas of the Moon*—This refers to each of the sixteenth part of the moon's diameter/disc, or one of the various phases of the moon. The moon waxes and wanes in a fourteen day phase—each day it is different from the other. Thus we have fourteen Kalaas of the moon. Added to this is the full moon and the dark moon—i.e. two more Kalaas. Therefore the total Kalaas of the moon are $14 + 2 = 16$. These fourteen Kalaas have the following names—Amritaa, Maanadaa, Pushaa, Tushti, Pushti, Rati, Dhriti, Shashini, Chandrika, Kanti, Jyotsnaa, Sri, Pritirangaa, Purnaa and Swarajaa. That is why Lord Krishna is said to belong to the Moon race because he possessed sixteen Kalaas. The symbolism is very stark.

(i) *The 12 Kalaas of the Sun*—This refers to each of the twelfth part in which the sun's diameter/disc has been divided. They are called 'Dwaadash Aditya', meaning the twelve forms in which the Sun God is known. They are the following—Tapini, Taapini, Dhumraa, Jwaalini, Ruchi, Shushumna, Bhogadaa, Vishwaa, Bodhini, Dhaarini and Kshamaa.

That is why lord Ram was said to belong to the Solar race because he had twelve Kalaas possessed by the Sun. There is an obvious parallel here.

(j) *Other forms of Kalaas*—Other connotations of the word are the following:-- (i) the division of time equivalent to about eight seconds; (ii) one degree out of the three hundred and sixty degrees. So when this term 'Kalaa' is applied to that supreme Truth, also known as the supreme Brahm which is complete and wholesome, it implies that what is being referred to is but only one or more fraction of the whole, and therefore this one or more fraction cannot be a complete definition of the whole. At the best, it can give a rough idea of the principal, but not the exact idea of what constitute *Brahm*. This Brahm is an entity so wholesome and grand, so majestic, so magnificent, so stupendous and astounding that it transcends the definitions or parameters set by this particular word. That Truth or Brahm is beyond their reach and dimension; these various connotations of the word cannot either be applied to that Truth or Brahm nor can they define it in its entirety in any way.

(k) *The 64 Kalaas of Brahm*—It is said that the complete Brahm has sixty four Kalaas. If these are divided into four quarters or quadrants or aspects or symbolic legs of Brahm, three-fourths is in the realm of the unknown (heaven) and only one-fourth is in the form of the visible creation (world). Therefore, if Brahm is a complete cycle of sixty four Kalaas, then the known physical world has $64/4 = 16$ Kalaas. It is a quadrant of Brahm. (Rig Veda, 10/90/4).

It is said that Brahm has four 'Paads' or legs which symbolise the four corners of creation. That is, Brahm surrounds this entire creation from all sides. Out of these four legs, the visible world represents one. The rest of the creation stands for the remaining three legs. According to another theory, Brahm is said to have sixty four Kalaas or aspects or levels. Out of these, the known world is represents Brahm's sixteen Kalaas, i.e. this world is only one fourth aspect of the entire Brahm—a fact metaphorically depicted by saying that Brahm can measure this world in one step. The rest is the invisible macrocosmic aspect of Brahm which is beyond imagination and comprehension. This is obvious because if one fourth is so difficult to understand, one can easily understand the astounding nature and stupendity of the remaining three fourths.

(l) *The Kalaa in the context of OM*—In the geometrical symbol of Brahm which is pronounced as 'OM', these three Naad, Bindu and Kalaa appear as a crescent moon or a shallow bowl with a dot at the center placed on the top of the symbol for OM. This Naad is like a big trough and represents the cosmic bowl or crucible in which the primary cosmic gel was placed to initiate the process of creation. The Bindu appears to indicate the pin-point source of heat, radiation or any other activating source placed just above this crucible to inject sufficient energy in to the primary fluid and activate it. It acts like a source of energy directed at the crucible (Naad) set off the chain reaction that would ultimately culminate in the creation. The Kalaa which refers to the various phases of the moon would indicate the different stages through which the entire process passed from the initial stages of creation to its complete closure. But even as the parents of a child do not undergo any apparent change while the embryo develops in the mother's womb, the Supreme Being remained the same all the while the creation developed and unfolded in the cosmic womb represented by Mother Nature. Another example to explain is the moon's disc which appears to change every single day but all know that it remains the

same, and the apparent change in its shape is only due to the angle with which its lighted or dark surface is viewed from the earth.

Next facet of OM is called *Kalaa-teet*—i.e. the entity that is beyond the ambit of the concept of Kalaa; that is beyond the tangible and the visible spectrum of creation. The word 'Kalaa' has been defined above, and 'Teet' is used as a suffix to indicate something that is beyond its meaning or ambit; something that surpasses it. So if Kalaa means the world whose attributes and characteristics are changeable, for instance the changing shape of the moon every night which is called the moon's Kalaa, then something that is non-changeable, something that is immutable and steady, something that cannot be seen to change would be called Kalaa-teet. If Kalaa is regarded as the visible world in which the creature lives, then Kalaa-teet would mean the invisible world which is far beyond the inhabited world. Similarly, if Kalaa refers to the characteristics and qualities of the creature which are clearly exhibited by him, then Kalaa-teet would mean his hidden traits, temperaments, nature and thoughts.

The word Kalaa-teet in the present context of OM implies the macrocosmic aspects of creation which are not immediately visible and verifiable by the sensory organs of the body but are nevertheless true and existent. It refers to the vast invisible world beyond the known visible world where we live and which comes under the ambit of the word Kalaa as described above. The realm of Kalaa-teet is beyond the purview of this known world. It is like the Turiyateet state of Yoga which is the transcendental state of extreme blissfulness which surpasses and is superior to the Turiya state which is a preliminary state before Turiyateet state is reached.

Finally, there is the eighth component called the 'Param'—literally that which is supreme and ultimate, that which is Absolute and beyond which there is nothing; that which encircles even the outer periphery of creation. This Param is known as Brahm. In a sense it has no boundaries and definitions. It is the equivalent to the final dissolution of the creation into nothing from where there is no return. It represents the supreme transcendental Brahm as opposed to the creature and the visible creation which are metaphorically represented by word 'Kalaa', and the vast fathomless cosmos which is represented by the word 'Kalaa-teet'.

The eight facets or parts of OM also represent the four states of consciousness in which the entire creation consisting of the microcosmic world at the individual level and the vast fathomless world of the cosmos at the macrocosmic level exists. These four states at each level of existence multiplied by the two levels of existences (micro and macro) gives the figure of eight ($4 \times 2 = 8$). The four states are described below in the paragraph 'four limbs of OM'.

³The *four limbs of OM* are the four states in which the consciousness exists in this creation. They are the following—the waking state or Jagrat state of consciousness, the dreaming state or Swapna state of consciousness, the deep sleep state or Sushupta state of consciousness, and the Turiya state of consciousness which is the transcendental state of existence.

⁴The *three eyes of OM* symbolically refer to so-called 'Triad' of creation—(a) such as the Trinity Gods named Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder; (b) the three states of mortal creation at the micro level—the gross body of the individual creature called the waker or Vishwa, the subtle body of the individual creature called the dreamer or Taijas, and the causal body of the individual creature called the deep sleeper or Pragna; (c) the three states of immortal creation at the macro level—the sum total of all the gross bodies in creation called the cosmic waker or Viraat Purush, the sum total of all the subtle bodies in creation called the cosmic dreamer or Hiranyagarbha, and the sum total of all the causal bodies in creation called the cosmic deep sleeper or Ishwar; (d) the three Gunas called Sata (the noblest quality in the

creation), Raja (the medium quality) and Tama (the meanest quality that a creature can possess); (e) the three Shaktis or powers and potentials that drive the world on—such as Gyan Shakti or the power of knowledge, Ichha Shakti or the driving power of desires and ambitions, and Kriya Shakti or the ability and strength to carry out actions and do desired deeds; (f) the three planes of time—such as the past, the present and the future; (g) the three worlds—such as the terrestrial world where earth-bound creatures live, the sky where those who fly live, and the heavens where the Spirits and Gods live.

⁵The *five patron deities or Gods of OM* are the following—Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, Shiva the concluder, Ishwar the supreme Lord or the Viraat Purush who is above them and from whom these Trinity Gods have come into being, and the eternal transcendental Lord known as Brahm who is supreme and shines like the celestial Sun upon the entire pyramidal structure of the creation, illuminating it. The five Gods according to another version are the following—Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra (the angry form of Shiva responsible for conclusion of creation), Ishwar (the Viraat all-pervading macrocosmic body of the supreme Lord), and Sadaa Shiva (the eternal Truth that is absolute, calm, neutral and auspicious, that outlives all other Gods and from which they are all created in the beginning of creation.)

14-15. A person who is not well versed in the various aspects of OM, both at the level of this mortal, tangible, visible and perceptible creation represented by the individual creature as well as the immortal, invisible, intangible, supreme and transcendental level represented by the cosmic Brahm, is not fit to be called a Brahmin. [Since the word ‘Brahmin’ refers to someone who is well acquainted with the profundity, divinity and glory of Brahm with all its mystical hues and shades of meanings, a person who is not enlightened about it has no right to be called a Brahmin.]

It is said that the Pranav or the ethereal word OM is like the symbolic spiritual bow, the Atma of the creature which is its pure conscious self is the arrow, and the target is Brahm. [That is, the main aim of employing the word OM in meditation and other spiritual endeavours is to obtain access to the transcendental Divinity known as Brahm which is the ultimate resting place for the soul of the creature. The Atma of the creature is his true ‘self’. So this stanza means that a wise Brahmin is one who employs the divine Mantra OM to enable his Atma to reach its spiritual target of Brahm-realisation just like the arrow shot by an expert archer reaches and hits the bull’s eye of the target. A man is called truly Brahmin if he has that expertise when his ‘self’ has been realised by him and he has become worthy to be identified with Brahm from whom he has derived his name of a Brahmin.]

One should not be lackadaisical or careless in pursuing one’s objective, and should be diligent and focused in aiming this arrow at the target. [That is, the spiritual aspirant should practice meditation with full attention and interest, without letting himself be distracted by any other extraneous considerations. It is only then that he would taste success just like the archer is able to pierce the object with his arrow when he fixes his sight and attention steadily on it. Diligence, steadfastness, singularity of purpose, devotion, resilience, persistence, consistency and commitment are the basic requirements in obtaining success in every field, whether it is spiritual or otherwise. These eclectic virtues act as the spur that encourages, aids and propels the aspirant to reach his goal without losing steam midway, faltering, wavering and falling on the way side before the aim is fulfilled.]

As a result of this effort, when the supreme and ultimate aim is reached, i.e. when the spiritual aspirant has reached his target of Brahm realisation (which entails realisation of the true nature of his own pure conscious 'self' called the Atma which in turn is Brahm personified in his own bosom), he is able to obtain freedom from having to perform so many auspicious deeds and take so many righteous actions (such as doing fire sacrifices, making charities and giving alms to the poor, studying the scriptures and doing meditation and contemplation etc. as part of the comprehensive efforts that a wise and sagacious man makes in order to reach the goal of realisation of the ultimate spiritual Truth which would give him eternal peace and bliss). [In other words, when the creature has reached the pinnacle of spiritual attainment, he finds such a huge and fathomless ocean of bliss, ecstasy, happiness, contentedness and peace that he does not need to make any more efforts in this direction. The aim of all meditation and contemplation, all auspicious deeds and righteous actions, is to obtain liberation for the soul from the endless cycle of delusions, grief, miseries and pains, and when that objective is fulfilled by Brahm realisation or Truth realisation, these mediums or tools become redundant. In the instance of the bow used to shoot the arrow at the target as cited in this verse above, once the arrow has been successfully shot and it has hit the target, the bow is no longer needed. Similarly, once self and Brahm realisation has been successfully done, once the creature has found his eternal peace and bliss that he had been searching for generations, once he has found his soul's emancipation and salvation, he would no longer need the Mantra OM, or for that matter any other means such as Yoga etc. as prescribed in the scriptures for this purpose.] (14-15).

16. It is from OM that all the divine Gods have come into existence; it is from OM that all forms of sound, audible or inaudible, in creation have emerged; and it is from OM that the entire creation and all its varied forms, both the animate as well as the inanimate forms, have sprung forth (16).

17. The divine word OM has three constituent parts called its Matras. The first is the 'Hrisva' Matra which literally means something that is little, small, light, miniscule, and of minimum attributes. It symbolically stands for the letter 'A' which is the first vowel of the Sanskrit language and the basic sound in creation. It is also the first subtle sound from which the word OM has been envisioned to evolve. [It is like the sound made while pronouncing the word with the silent A—as in 'ahoy', *abhor*, *abase* etc.] It has the symbolic mystical ability to destroy all sins and misdeeds.

The long sound of the second letter of OM, i.e. the sound of 'U' or 'Ooo' (as in *owl*, *awning*, *autumn* etc.) represents the eternal bountiful treasury of divine assets and good fortunes that are easily made available to the spiritual aspirant. [This is a metaphoric way of saying that when one has realised the truthfulness of Brahm and the divinity of his own pure conscious Atma, the world in front of his eyes no longer remains one that is perishable and a cause of sorrows, miseries, pains and entrapments. On the other hand, he begins to see it in the light of Brahm-realisation as a vibrant manifestation of the cosmic Consciousness in all its radiant and brilliant colours and variations. The world becomes one big treasury of bliss and happiness when seen from the eyes of wisdom and enlightenment. The aspirant realises that it is in this very life that he can realise the supreme Truth by means of meditation and contemplation, by studying the

scriptures and doing auspicious deeds, and in due course attaining the double benefit of enjoying the comforts and pleasures of this materialistic world and at the same time achieving the bliss of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation. He begins to see the world in a positive light rather than from a negative angle. He finds the world friendly, brotherly and kind as well as full of charm, colour, interest, hope, life and energy, instead of seeing it as his enemy, being suspicious and skeptical of everything in it, and treating it as the root cause of his physical sufferings. This positive attitude is kindled in an enlightened man because he sees this world as a manifestation of Brahm and not as a manifestation of Maya or delusions. Every coin has two sides; it depends upon how one looks at it. Such a wise man serves the supreme Lord when he serves the world, and not to serve his self interest.]

Finally, the last word 'M' is the half-syllable because it is said while the mouth is being finally closed after completing the pronunciation of the word OM (as when the mouth is closed after having said the word *mum*, *autumn*, *rum*). [The actual full letter of the Sanskrit consonant is 'Ma', and it is pronounced with an open mouth as 'M' in *mother*. This is not the case of its pronunciation in OM when the mouth is closed immediately upon its saying as done when one pronounces the word '*rum*' for instance. So it is a 'half consonant' or 'half sound' of the letter M.] It symbolises the attainment of 'Moksha', literally liberation and deliverance from the gross deluding world symbolised by this perishable body and illusionary activities in search of that illusive happiness and peace. [This is because after death, the creature finds eternal freedom from all the horrendous troubles and unending miseries and sorrows that he had been subjected to while alive in this world. No matter how hard he tried, he was not able to break free from the shackles of miseries and horrors of this world which kept his peace of mind and bliss of soul at bay. He was buffeted by the agonies of the body as well as the unending cycle of sorrows and worldly delusions which hit him in regular waves much like tides in a heaving ocean, sweeping him off his feet and carrying him along in their wake. The world never lets him rest in peace. But upon self and Brahm realisation he finds eternal rest and peace symbolised by the closing of the mouth after complete pronunciation of the word OM. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the cycle of birth and death has finally come to an end for a creature who has realised the supreme Truth of Brahm, for now he turns inwards during deep meditation and contemplation on the supreme transcendental Divinity residing in his own bosom as his pure consciousness or Atma, and becomes completely silent and totally oblivious of what is happening around him in the gross world of material sense objects. Thus, all those inputs of the world which had hitherto been causing disturbances to his peace of mind and heart cease to have any impact upon him, leading to his eternal peace and happiness, his complete beatitude and felicity. Refer Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 15, 22.] (17).

[Note—The concept of using OM as a medium of doing meditation has been expounded in a number of Upanishads, for instance Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse nos. 18, 21; Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 71-81 etc.

18. The cosmic Naad or the background sound that prevails in the entire cosmos is not audible to the ear of the ordinary creature. This sound is a continuous one much like the unbroken stream of oil flowing on an even surface. This sound resembles the prolonged reverberating sound that resonates when a huge metal bell is struck hard (18).

[Note—The various shades of sound heard when Naad is experienced by an attained ascetic has been described in a number of Upanishads—viz. Naad Bindu of Rig Veda, Yogchudamani of Sam Veda, Hanso-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Brahm Vidya, Amrit Naad and Ekakchar of Krishna Yajur Veda amongst others.]

19. A wise practitioner of Yoga should meditate upon the supreme Divinity known as Brahm, the Lord of the entire creation, who is represented by the eternal word OM. This eternal Divinity is symbolically represented by the thumb shaped pricarp (called the 'Karnikaa') of the lotus-like heart of the practitioner. It is self-illuminated and radiant like the erect filament of light of a lighted lamp (19).

[Note—There are other Upanishads also which affirm that the size of this subtle Atma or consciousness present inside the bosom of all the living beings measures about the size of the thumb. Some of these are Kathavalli Upanishad, 2/1/12, and Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 3/13.]

20-21. [It should be noted that verse nos. 20-106 are exclusively dedicated to the philosophy and practice of Yoga. Some of the other Upanishads that should be consulted while reading these verses are the following—Yog Chudamani of the Sam Veda tradition; Hanso-panishad, Trishikhi Brahmin and Mandal Brahmin of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition; Tejobindu, Yogshikha, Yogtattva, Yogkundalini, Amrit Naad and Varaaha Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

The practitioner of Yoga should draw in air (breath) through the Ida Naadi (i.e. through the left nostril)¹ and fill the abdomen with it². [That is, he should withhold the inhaled air inside the body for a fixed period of time.] Meanwhile, he should contemplate upon and fix his attention upon the divine symbol of OM representing the supreme transcendental Brahm in his bosom (as described in earlier verses).

The three steps of Pranayam (breath control exercise undertaken in Yoga) are called 'Purak' (inhaling wind or breath), 'Khumbak' (holding the inhaled breath inside the body for a certain time so as to fill the abdomen with it), and 'Rechak' (exhaling breath slowly, so that the withheld wind is completely let out of the body). These three phases of Pranayam have three patron Gods, and they are Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the annihilator or concluder respectively³ (20-21).

[Note—¹The process of inhaling is called 'Purak'.

²The process of holding breath inside the body is called 'Khumbak'.

³The symbolism is obvious here. Drawing in of fresh air inside the body during the process of Purak is tantamount to infusing fresh lease of new life into the body, a work assigned to the creator Brahm. When the body holds this oxygen-rich air during the Khumbak phase, it draws nourishment from it in order to sustain itself and its tissues, the function which falls in the domain of Vishnu. Finally, when breath is exhaled during the Rechak phase of Pranayam it symbolises the expulsion of the life-giving Pran or the vital wind from the gross body, thereby symbolising its death.]

22. The inner-self should be symbolically made the lower end of the 'Arani' (the wooden drill used to light the sacred fire by vigorous rubbing of two pieces of firewood, one at the top and the other at the bottom of this drill during fire sacrifices in ancient times) and the OM (represented by the sound made during the process of inhalation and exhalation) as the upper end, while deep meditation and contemplation is to be treated as the vigorous rubbing of the two ends in order to ignite the flame of self-realisation which is like

igniting the sacred fire of the religious sacrifice. The 'light' of knowledge and wisdom that emanates from the 'flame' of enlightenment ignited by the energy generated during deep meditation and contemplation helps the aspirant to 'witness', to 'perceive' and 'experience' the presence of the pure conscious Atma or the truthful 'self' residing in his own bosom as a representative of the supreme transcendental Brahm. This is called 'self-realisation'—i.e. becoming aware of one's true 'self' as pure enlightened Consciousness personified (22).

23. A wise and expert ascetic should meditate upon all the subtle shades of vibrations generated by meditating upon the ethereal and divine word OM (i.e. by mentally humming this ethereal word and concentrating his mind and fixing his attention on the different shades of notes and tones of sound emanating from this divine word OM while it is being hummed during the entire process of Pranayam) till the time the inhaled wind is completely exhaled during the Rechak phase of Pranayam (23).

[Note—The practitioner of Yoga should use the Mantra OM while doing Pranayam, a fact reiterated in a number of Upanishads, for instance Amrit Naad, verse nos. 18, 21 amongst many such Upanishads. The entire process of Pranayam involves three basic steps—viz. inhalation of breath called the Purak phase, the retaining of breath inside the body for a period of prescribed time called the Kumbhak phase, and the exhalation of the impurity-laden air during the Rechak phase. OM is used as a Mantra to help concentrate the mind in this entire process. When OM is repeated deeply in the mind, it produces vibrations that resonate in the head (see verse no. 102), and these vibrations also help soothe the nerves by gently massaging them, thereby not only giving them rest but also enabling the practitioner to experience extreme bliss and ecstasy when his nerves are titillated. The nerves are numbed simultaneously, thereby alleviating pain and tension in them, which in turn calms down the brain and the restlessness body. During Pranayam, the heart's action is slowed down because of reduced degree of physical activity, breathing becomes easy and regular along with the slowing down of the general metabolic activity of the body. This general calming effect of the Mantra on the nerves helps the practitioner to concentrate his attention on the Naad which is a subtle sound and can be heard only when all extraneous sounds are eliminated. To witness the truth of this statement one needs to plug the ear with the finger when all the sounds emanating from the external world are blocked out and one can hear a subtle roar in the ear.]

24. Those who experience and witness the presence of the supreme transcendental Consciousness in the form of a divine 'Hans'¹ (Swan) that resides in the inner-self of the living being feel spiritually fulfilled and are deemed to be realised and successful in their spiritual endeavour. This Hans is as splendorous and radiant as millions of suns taken together. [This is because the consciousness that is present inside the subtle heart of the creature is like the celestial sun that shines brilliantly in the sky above the earth.]

This metaphoric 'Hans' is a mysterious and enigmatic entity. It shows movement on the one hand and remains unmoving on the other hand² (24).

[Note—¹The word *Hans* metaphorically refers to the bird Swan. This bird is considered the most pure, clean, wise, erudite and clever among the birds. It is believed that it eat pearls and picks them up from amongst an assortment of gems, which symbolically means it picks up and accepts only the best amid the variety of things available to it in the form of an assortment of various qualities and virtues that define the character of all individual creatures in this world. It is also reputed to drink the purest form of milk, leaving aside the water content of an adulterated form of this nourishing liquid. It is also

the vehicle of Goddess Saraswati, the patron Goddess of knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, speech and learning. Hence, the reference to a swan while describing a creature conscious of the vital wind or Pran passing through him means the basic, inherent and intrinsic tendency of that wisened and intelligent creature is to be the best, most pure and divine, wise, awakened and enlightened, adroit, clever and sagacious like the swan, and pick all the goodness and forsake all that is bad in this world. Saraswati rides on a swan, symbolising the creature's inborn enlightenment and excellence of his mental caliber. Symbolically, Saraswati resides in his Pran because it rides on the swan, i.e. in his heart, throat and mind—that is, his heart has purity of emotions, he speaks well of all, and his words are sought after by all as priceless gems of wisdom, and his mind is intelligent, discerning and noble.

The alphabet 'Ha' of the word 'Hans' is sounded by the vibration of the exhaled wind passing through the vocal cords present in the throat or the wind pipe which connects to the nose, while the alphabet 'Sa' is sounded by the root of the tongue which opens into the mouth when the breath is inhaled. Both the nose and the mouth open in the same cavity called the throat. Hence, the inter relationship between 'Ha' and 'Sa' is evident. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the divine swan, but he was unaware of his divinity and sublimity, his exalted stature, till that was pointed out to him in this verse. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must do not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan.

Refer (a) Krishna Yajur Veda—Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3-4; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 61-65; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 20-28, 61-64, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11, and Canto 6, verse no. 20, 52-54. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Hanso-panishad is exclusively dedicated to explain the concept of the pure conscious Atma by way of using the metaphor of a Hans. (c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 82-83.

During the twenty-four hour period covering a single day and night, a person inhales and exhales, or breathes, roughly twenty-one thousand times because each cycle of inhalation and exhalation is equivalent to saying one Mantra 'Hans' consisting of the two syllables 'Ha and Sa'. Refer verse nos. 61-65.

²The Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 93 clearly asserts that the 'Hans' is a metaphor for Pran. So when it is said in the present verse that Hans shows movement for instance, it refers to the movement in the form of the vital winds such as Pran (breath) which comes in and goes out of the body, the Apaana wind that moves down the intestines and helps the movement of food in the intestines, the Udaana wind that helps the body to rise etc. The proof of their movement lies in the fact that all the different functions of the body, including external movements such as walking, holding, speaking, eating and excreting etc. that are done by a man while awake are controlled by these winds, but when the man sleeps the external activities cease, making it appear that the vital winds are not moving. When a man is asleep, his vital winds are now moving inside his Naadis or nerves and veins in the form of his Pran or the vital life-giving factor called consciousness. But these winds present inside the body do not appear to move a bit; they do not show any vivid sign of movement at all; no one can observe the movement of the Udaana wind, the Vyana wind or the Samaana wind and even the Apaana wind that are present inside the body of the creature. Even in the outside world, no one can actually see the wind or air move from one place to another; their movement is deduced indirectly when we observe the movement of leaves for example on a tree. Thus, this Hans in the

form of the Pran shows movement on the one hand, and remains immobile on the other hand.]

25. The Mana (mind) is the cause of creation, sustenance, development, enhancement and the ultimate conclusion of this deluding world of material sense objects, a world which inherently possesses the three 'Gunas' (the qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama) as the basic characteristic qualities that are present in all the creatures living in this world in various proportions, determining each individual's personality, behavioural patterns and character, and which is also marked by the rhythmic cycle of birth, growth and death.

When the cause of all this (i.e. the triangular world having the three apexes of birth, growth and death) is eliminated, i.e. when the Mana is abolished or made redundant so as to remove the very cause of this world coming into existence in the first place, the spiritual aspirant is able to free himself from the distorted and restrictive views of existence created by this triangular world having the three Gunas as its three sides and the three phases of birth, growth and death as its three apexes, and see beyond it¹. It is then that the unrestricted and undistorted divine view of the supreme state of divine existence is discernible to and perceivable by him, and this is called the glorious world of Lord Vishnu (who is also known as the Viraat Purush), thereby indicating the macrocosmic view of creation which is much beyond the selfish and myopic view of the world centered around the individual creature (25).

[Note—¹This reminds one of the glass prism through one sees anything. The view seen directly would be very different from what is seen through this prism. Even the ordinary sunlight gets refracted and breaks up into seven colours when it passes through the prism. Similarly, the actual view of the world gets distorted when one sees it with biased mind and tainted intellect. So when one attempts to see the truth about something as ethereal and sublime through the prism of the mind and intellect that has already been corrupted by the influences of the deluding world of artificiality, it is but natural that the truth would elude him. That is why a man who has not attuned his mind-intellect apparatus sufficiently enough to peer deeply into and behind the façade of this world would be easily flummoxed when he reads in the scriptures that this world is a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm. He begins to wonder whether Brahm is also as false and illusive as the world which he sees, or are the scriptures wrong in what they say of Brahm. The reality is that he is seeing Brahm with a prism that would never allow the reality to be observed by him. This fact has been beautifully brought out in verse nos. 93/1-93/15 below which describes how the Atma sees the world with various colours when it looks at it through the differently coloured petals of the symbolic lotus present in the heart where this Atma lives.]

26. The subtle heart is envisioned as a divine Lotus having a stem with eight sepals and thirty two petals. Inside its enclosure or the core (symbolised by the thallus) is present the Sun, and within the Sun is present the Moon (26).

[Note—The base of the flower from which the petals and sepals of the flower spring out, i.e. the thalamus, is like a golden sac symbolising the Sun, and the nectar present in this sac is indicated by the Moon because of its cool and soothing characteristics. The Moon is regarded in the Purans as the celestial pitcher of Amrit, the ambrosia of the Gods.]

27. In the center of this symbolic Moon located here is present the fire element representing the subtle spiritual energy of the pure consciousness that is said to reside in

the subtle heart. At the core of this fire element are the intangible eclectic virtues of brilliance, radiance and splendour that are inherent to any form of 'light' emanating from any source (which in this case is the 'consciousness' located here). In the center of this fire endowed with the brilliance of a splendorous light is located the 'divine seat', called the 'Peeth', which is embellished with gems and priceless jewels of various shapes and colours (27).

[Note—The ovary of the flower compared to the Moon is supposed to harbour the fire element signifying the presence of the spark of life in a latent form in the ovule, and the microspore inside this ovule is the so-called symbolic seat where the actual 'life of the lotus plant' is ensconced in the representative form of Lord Vishnu. This is because Vishnu is regarded as a manifestation of Brahm at the cosmic level of existence and is synonymous with the Viraat Purush who is the invisible, all-pervading and all-encompassing macrocosmic gross body of Brahm. Vishnu is thus the Supreme Being personified, and it is from his navel as the primary creator that Brahma, the secondary creator of the visible world, was born atop a divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Vishnu at the very beginning of creation.

It ought to be noted here that we are dealing with three levels of creation here—the subtle level represented by the ovary, the subtler level symbolised by the ovule, and subtlest level indicated by the 'divine spark of life present inside this ovule'.]

28. Seated on this exalted divine seat or 'Peeth' is Lord Vasudeo (i.e. Lord Vishnu, so called because he is the Lord of all the 'Vasus' which represent the physical wealth and priceless assets needed to sustain life in this creation as well as their patron Gods¹). Vasudeo is honoured by the epithet of 'Niranjan' (because he is one having no defects, faults, taints, blemishes, shortcomings and scars of any kind; one who is absolutely immaculate and pristine pure; an epithet applied to Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation. one whose sublime, subtle, esoteric and mystical form is so microscopic and diffused that it cannot be seen by the naked eyes of the physical gross body, but which can only be perceived by the eye of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment). The Lord is especially adorned by the Srivatsa², the Kaustav Mani (the special jewel worn by Vishnu) and the Mukta Mani (pearls in the form of garland) that the Lord wears on his chest (28).

[Note--¹The eight *Vasus* are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are— (i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun God (who provides energy and food) and his rays and radiance (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), (iii) Shiva (the concluder or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water God (called Varun), (vi) the Fire God (called Agni), (vii) any body of water such as a pond, a river etc., and (viii) holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation). According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/3, the Vasus are the following—Fire, Earth, Air, Antariksha (the space of the solar system), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heavens), the Moon, and the Nakshatras (the stars and the planets).

²*Srivatsa*— this is the mark of the foot of sage Bhrigu which he had caste on the chest of Vishnu ones when he got annoyed upon the Lord. The Lord is so enamoured of his devotees that instead of taking umbrage at this disrespect shown by the sage and punishing him for his misdemeanor, he had blessed the sage that his footprint would always remain on his chest as one of the jewels worn by Lord Vishnu. However, Laxmi was so angry at the temerity of sage Brighu that she cursed that henceforth she, in the

form of wealth and material abundance, would always shun a Brahmin; it is believed that this is the reason why Brahmins, who are otherwise of a high birth, are always serving others in the society who are junior to them by birth for their monetary and material needs.]

29. The spiritual aspirant should meditate, with due persistence, steadfastness, devotion and humility, upon the glorious, splendorous and divine form of Lord Vishnu whose dazzling radiance is equivalent to millions of moons, and whose immaculate purity resembles the immaculacy and purity of untainted, transparent and colourless crystal (29).

30. One should concentrate his mind and meditate upon this glorious divine form of the four-armed Lord Vishnu (the sustainer and protector of creation), who resembles the flower of the linseed plant called 'Atasi', honorably seated on an exalted divine seat located in the navel¹ while inhaling air during the process of Purak phase of doing Pranayam² (30).

[Note—¹The *navel* is the point in the body where the placenta is attached to the embryo, enabling the latter to draw its nourishment from the mother's body. Lord Vishnu is the sustainer and nourisher of creation, so his seat at the site of the navel is a symbolism of this biological fact. Besides this, the navel is the site of the 'Nabhi Chakra' and below it is the 'Kanda' which is the center from where all the Naadis (nerves) in the body branch out. These Naadis carry consciousness and life throughout the length and breadth of the body which is a microcosm of the entire creation. This Nabhi Chakra is also said to be the abode of the Sun God which is a symbolic representation of the fact that the sun is the eternal cosmic source of light, heat and energy without which life on this earth is unimaginable.

²*Purak* is the phase of Pranayam when breath is inhaled through the nostrils. The word literally means 'to fill, to supply, to replenish'. During this phase, fresh life-giving air element is drawn inside the body. This air is then allowed to remain inside the body for a given period of time during the second phase called 'Kumbhak' which literally means a 'pitcher or hollow pot'. This phase is mentioned below in verse no. 31 below. Finally, the air is expelled during the exhalation phase called 'Rechak' which means 'to clean, to purge, to eliminate'. This phase is mentioned in verse no. 32 below. These three phases are an integral part of Yoga and all the Upanishads that deal with Yoga describe them in one context or the other.]

31. Similarly, during the next phase which entails the holding of the inhaled air inside the body, called the phase of Kumbhak, one should concentrate his mind and meditate upon the divine and glorious form of the four-headed Lord Brahma (the creator), whose countenance is fair but with a slight hint of pink, as being seated on the symbolic divine seat located in the subtle heart (in the sublime form of pure consciousness) (31).

[Note—The heart is the place where emotions and sentiments have their seat. It is the heart which makes a man emotionally and sentimentally attached to this world, loving it and longing for it with his heart, yearning for its sensual pleasures and longing for its material comforts. It is the heart which makes a man feel sentimental in certain situations, making him either hate or love something or someone. All sentimental notions and emotive impulses gush out from his heart and not from his mind-intellect which are more realistic and analytical by nature. The heart is the seat of emotions and sentiments. So when the Mana or the mind is under the command of the heart, the former is said to be

emotive as well. In fact, as mentioned in verse no. 25, the Mana or the emotive mind is at the root of this vast colourful world of imaginary mirages that trap the unwary and innocent creature in their ever-spreading tentacles. Since the creator Brahma is said to have had in his heart a desire to create a wonderful world of magnificent charm and astounding diversity before he actually made a determined bid to implement his desires and give them a concrete shape using the instrument of the intellectual, analytical and discerning mind, it is safely assumed that the world's original or primary place of origin was in the heart of Brahma.

In other words, the heart came into the picture even before the mind was involved. The heart decided that it should create a colourful and charming world to play with, and then influenced the mind to see how this goal can be achieved in a systematic and planned manner. Then when the intellect warned the creature that he is allowing himself to get trapped by his own creation, the heart overruled its advice and kept the creature entangled in the world. It is only once in a while that wisdom dawns on the mental horizon of some isolated fortunate creature who would pay heed to the heed of the intellect and rein in the natural impulses of the heart so as to divert the efforts of the mind to search the truth and reality of existence. This is the general picture at the level of the individual creature.

Now to come back to our above verse, once the creation came into being, Brahma started to love it naturally in the same manner as a father naturally loves his offspring no matter how stupid or wild or good-for-nothing he or she is. The emotions of love and endearment have their seat in the heart, and the world exists only as long as the man is emotionally and sentimentally attached to it, for as soon as his heart feels detached towards the world the latter has no charms left for the man. We love anything with the heart and not the mind. When a couple wish to start a family, the primary requirement is the involvement of the heart—i.e. the factors of love, passion, lust and belonging come into play immediately. Then when the offspring materializes, the parents begin to love him more than any other possession they have. In short, the heart and the world are intricately and inexplicably related to each other.

This fact is celebrated here in this verse by saying that Brahma has his seat in the heart. As has already been pointed out in verse no. 20-21 and note of verse no. 30 earlier, the Purak phase of Pranayam refers to the air being drawn in to fill the abdomen with it air. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the practitioner of meditation has accepted the cosmic responsibility of creation and the fact that he is a personification of the cosmic creator known as Brahma, the four-headed God of creation. Since Brahma is the creator of the visible world and the creatures who would inhabit this earth, the person who accepts Brahma in his heart also symbolically accepts the fact that he is the creator of this world. Seating this Brahma in the heart is like giving permanence to this belief. This fact is symbolised by the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam when the air is withheld in the body for a prolonged time. In metaphysical terms it means that he has accepted that this world in which he finds himself trapped is one of his own creation, and therefore he is the only one who can bring an end to it. This latter fact is metaphorically represented by the Rechak phase of Pranayam.]

32. Finally, while exhaling air during the concluding phase called Rechak, the aspirant should meditate upon and fix his mind upon the three-eyed Lord Shiva (the concluder) who is honorably seated on an exalted divine seat located in the forehead (between the eyebrows). Lord Shiva has a white (fair) complexion resembling the colour of crystal or quartz. [Crystal or quartz appear to be white in colour though they are colourless and do not have any inherent colour of their own but only reflect the colour of the sunlight which

is white, indicating Lord Shiva's purity of thoughts and his inherent auspiciousness and uncorrupted nature because this 'white' colour is symbol of such eclectic virtues as purity, auspiciousness, divinity and holiness. This colour of his complexion is made physically possible because he smears the ash of the fire sacrifice all over his body.]

Lord Shiva is honoured by the epithet of 'Nishkal', i.e. one who is without a spot and taint or faults and shortcomings of any kind, who is stable and unwavering or is unchanging and steady under all circumstances and periods of time.

Lord Shiva is the vanquisher and destroyer of all sins and misdeeds along with their horrendous consequences for the creature (32).

[Note—*Lord Shiva* is the most enlightened, wise and self-realised omnipotent great Lord of creation who is able to provide the creature, who meditates properly upon the supreme Truth, with liberation from the bondages of ignorance and delusions, along with delivering his soul from this world of an endless cycle of birth and death by blessing it with emancipation and salvation. The Rechak phase of Pranayam relates to the exhalation of contaminated breath which has collected all the gaseous and other lighter impurities of the body while the breath was withheld inside during the Kumbhak phase. The Rechak phase is a metaphoric representation of the fact that the spiritual aspirant has collected all spiritual impurities that were present inside his inner self and has expelled them while doing Rechak. Thus, Yoga and especially Pranayam helps him to wash his inner self clean of all sorts of darkening soot of his character during the symbolic phase of Rechak, then imbibing auspicious and noble virtues during the Purak phase, and finally endeavouring to retain these good virtues during the Kumbhak phase. This entire process is tantamount to his becoming sinless and uncorrupted like Lord Shiva.

Shiva remains in a perpetual state of Yoga or doing meditation and contemplation as compared to Lord Vishnu and Brahma. This is because the latter two Gods are neck-deep involved in the creation and then the sustenance of the world; they have no time to reflect on the entanglements that this world have created for them. On the other hand, Shiva is totally detached and dispassionate by nature, so he finds time to shun the world and remain engrossed in the bliss obtained by meditation and contemplation. That is why Shiva is regarded as the patron God of ascetics and wise persons. That is also why he is regarded as the 'Maheshwar'—the 'Great' God.

Shiva is also regarded as the patron Lord of death and is said to reside in the cremation ground where he witnesses constant death all around him, and has therefore realised the futility of pursuing this illusive world. He has seen kings and paupers die and leave everything behind. So nothing of the material world can be exciting and attractive for him. He has realised that everything in this world is perishable and transient, and therefore to pursue them is as stupid an enterprise as running for water seeing a mirage in a hot desert. This wisdom of the futility of worldly charms and the perishability of the world itself makes Shiva most detached from the world and sincerely renounce it. Being totally detached from and disillusioned with all the charms of this fascinating world, he prefers to remain in seclusion of snow-capped mountains or caves where he can practice the worship of the Self in a constant state of meditation and contemplation called the state of Samadhi (a trance-like state of utter bliss and tranquility) without getting distracted by the deluding impulses of the material world.

That is why Shiva's symbolic abode is said to be in the forehead because the head is the site of wisdom, erudition, knowledge and enlightenment as compared to the heart which is inclined to be sentimental and emotional. The brain is located in the head of which the forehead is like the front of the computer monitor or the bonnet of the car. It is the head that makes the creature realise the 'truth and reality' by analyzing and interpreting facts in the proper perspective.

‘Death’ in the metaphysical context would mean getting rid of the world and involvement with it just like a dead person who is not concerned with what is happening around him. Mere physical presence without any involvement, or being a neutral observer, or even doing deeds without expecting any result or benefit from them are all tantamount to being ‘dead’ in this world as far as the Atma or soul is concerned. Therefore, a wise and self-realised man is virtually ‘dead’ even though he has a body and goes about his normal duties in this world.

When a self-realised person develops this eclectic state of mind and realises the eternal ‘Truth’ of existence, when he has understood that he is not an ordinary creature but a personification of Brahm in as much as the Trinity Gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva have their symbolic abode inside his own body as asserted in verse nos. 28-32 herein above, he is bound to undergo a profound psychological change for the better. He acknowledges the fact that he is a living personification of the Brahm, and therefore he must think and behave accordingly.

Since Rechak phase of Pranayam is symbolic of the exit of all forces of life from the body in the form of exhaled air, it is a metaphor for death of all evil tendencies and the cause of awakening of enlightenment in the aspirant much like the constant observation of death has awakened profound renunciation in Lord Shiva.

On the other hand, Vishnu has Laxmi as his consort, and this Goddess presides over material wealth and prosperity which can only entangle and not free the creature from worries. Similarly, Brahma is the forefather and so he is worried about the welfare of his progeny, the creation and its inhabitants. It is such an irony that though he is accompanied by Saraswati, the patron Goddess of knowledge, he still never feels as detached from this creation as Shiva is. So, whereas Brahma represents the first phase of life when the creature is born as an infant, and Vishnu stands for his growth and development, Shiva symbolises his last phase or old age when he has had enough of the world and seeks liberation and deliverance from its torments.]

33. Lord Shiva is symbolically enshrined in the divine Lotus present in the subtle heart of the creature. This Lotus resembles the plantain tree in as much as its stalk is bent like an inverted U at the top and the blossoming lotus flower is at the end of this stalk, its face pointing downwards. It is visualised that Lord Shiva, who is an embodiment of all the Vedas, resides here (33).

[Note—Lord Shiva is an embodiment of the Vedas because he is the wisest of all the Gods, and even wiser than Brahma, the creator of the Vedas. This is because Brahma has the notion of love and endearment for the world in his heart, being its creator and father, but Shiva is completely immune to such emotional involvements, remaining detached from and dispassionate towards the world. The Vedas also endeavour to inculcate the sense of profound dispassion towards this deluding world in the heart of the spiritual aspirant, and therefore Shiva is deemed to have really understood the essence and meaning of the teaching of these great scriptures as compared to Brahm, though the latter is the one from whom the Vedas were created like other elements of creation.

The posture mentioned here is the one obtained when one is deeply engaged in meditation when the neck is bent forward and the head is tilted downwards so that the chin touches the upper end of the breast bone below the Adam’s apple. This happens in an advanced stage of Yoga when the practitioner is so lost in his thoughts of the ‘self’ that he is not even aware that his head is not erect and is drooping.]

34. While meditating, the aspirant should concentrate his attention on the divine Lotus symbolically located in the subtle heart. This Lotus has a hundred sepals, a hundred

leaves and a hundred opened and blossoming petals. This Lotus enshrines the Sun, the Moon and the Fire element in this sequence (see verse no.26-27), and the aspirant should meditate respectively upon them in this order (34).

35. [Now, this verse describes how one can be made aware of these three entities, the Sun, the Moon and the Fire, while meditating upon this symbolic Lotus in his heart.]

In order to be enlightened about the presence of these entities in the symbolic divine Lotus¹ of the heart, the aspirant should first visualise in his mind during meditation that the flower is slowly developing and opening up in his heart. Then he should accept the 'Beej Akchars' or seed Mantras of these divine Gods (i.e. the basic letter or syllable that is regarded as the specific basic Mantra of these divine entities of creation, viz. the Sun, the Moon and Fire) and establish them in this Lotus² (35).

[Note—¹In the Upanishads, the lotus flower is invariably used to symbolise the heart because it is here that the pure consciousness known as the Atma resides. Lotus is a metaphor for purity, holiness, divinity and auspiciousness because of the physical fact that inspite of being born in a dirty pond it remains clean itself and not a drop of dirty water sticks to its petals.

²This is like cross fertilization of the female flower with the pollen grains from the male flower by the help of the bee or other insects. The Beej Mantras are like the pollen grains coming in from the anther of creation, and they represent the various divine forces of Brahm. The transplanting of these divine characteristics and auspicious virtues of Brahm in one's own heart is metaphorically said in the way of this cross fertilization of the flower by the pollen grains. When they fertilise the egg present in the symbolic divine Lotus present in the heart of the aspirant—a process only possible when the flower is fully grown up and in its prime beauty and blooming with all its colourful charms symbolising the maturity of thoughts of the spiritual aspirant—it is then that the eclectic virtues characteristic of Brahm are realised by the practitioner of Yoga in his own heart.]

36. A person who is aware of the presence of the supreme transcendental Being, the Supreme Being, in all the three places¹, the three paths², the three forms of Brahm³, the three Akchars or letters⁴, the three Maatraas⁵, as well as in the 'Ardha Maatraa' or the half-syllable⁶—such a person is the one who is deemed to be truthfully wise, erudite and enlightened about the fundamental tenets of the Vedas and the essence of their teachings (in the form of the great sayings called the Mahavakyas or the great sayings and other maxims and axioms of the scriptures. [Refer verse nos. 16-17 above.] (36).

[Note—¹The *three places* where Brahm resides are the three states in which consciousness exists, viz. the waking state, the dreaming state, and the deep sleep states of consciousness. The three places also refer to the three worlds called Triloki—viz. the terrestrial world represented by the word 'Bhu', the sky above the earth represented by the word 'Bhuvaha', and the heavens represented by the word 'Swaha'. Besides these interpretations, the three places refer to the three planes of time—viz. the past, the present and the future. The word in its broader perspective would involve the 'triad of the entire creation' because everything that exists is nothing but a manifestation of on single non-dual cosmic Truth known as Brahm. This is because of the simple fact that the creation 'does exist; it is seen, witnessed, lived in, and is verifiable and tangible', and not some hypothetical conjecture based on the figment of imagination.

The 'triad of creation' has been enumerated in note to verse no. 7, Canto 1 of Shwetashwatar Upanishad.

²The *three paths* are the following—the two extreme paths, one that leads to his pomp, reputation, glory and fame, and the other that causes just the opposite to happen, leading to his ill-fame, ignominy and degradation, and the third path is the median one of moderation that is regarded as auspicious and well thought of. It is marked by the virtues of detachment, dispassion and non-involvement. According to some versions, these three paths are represented by the three aspects of the fire sacrifice by which the Supreme Being is worshipped, viz. ‘Dhum’ or the aspect of the fire sacrifice when there is smoke and much sputtering and crackling of the firewood before it catches fire properly, ‘Archi’ or the aspect of the fire sacrifice when the flames are burning brightly and brilliantly, and ‘Agati’ or the concluding part of the sacrifice when some firewood or other offerings remain half-burnt or incompletely burnt, leading to either smoldering pieces of leftover offerings, or the residue of the extinguished fire in the form of still-smouldering pieces of charcoal and ambers. Refer also to verse no. 93/12-93/15 which describes the three paths that the Atma takes from the metaphysical point of view.

³The *three forms of Brahm* are the following—the ‘Vishwa’ representing the gross form of the visible world in which the individual creature lives in his waking state of consciousness, the ‘Viraat Purush’ representing the gross form of the invisible cosmic parent body in its cosmic plane of waking state from which all the individual creatures of this world have come into being, and ‘Brahm or Ishwar’ which that entity from which even this Viraat has evolved. Another interpretation of these three forms of Brahm is its manifestation as the Trinity Gods consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder.

⁴The *three letters* are the three letters of OM, i.e. A, U and M. These three letters cover in their ambit the entire gamut of creation, viz. ‘A’ covers birth, ‘U’ covers growth and development, and ‘M’ indicated death or conclusion.

⁵The *three Maatraas* of Brahm are represented by the three phases in which this creation has evolved as a fraction of Brahm. These are called ‘Hrisva’ or the small beginning indicating the primary forms of life such as algae and fungi, the ‘Dirgha’ or the most evolved and widespread form such as the higher species of animals and the highest rung occupied by the humans, and ‘Plut’ symbolising the rudimentary forms left after the creation come to the end, or the conclusion of the creation itself. If these are applied to the divine word OM standing for Brahm, then the letter ‘A’ stands for Hrisva, the letter ‘U’ for Dirgha, and the letter ‘M’ for Plut.

⁶The *half-syllable* stands for the incomplete sound of M pronounced at the fag end of saying OM when the mouth is closed as in the word ‘sum’, thereby denying the letter ‘M’ to be pronounced with its full glory with an open mouth as in the word ‘mouth’.]

37. A person is said to be well versed in the essential tenets and teachings of the Vedas when he becomes acquainted with (i.e. when he witnesses and experiences first hand) the supreme Divinity and the Absolute Truth of existence. It is known as the cosmic Consciousness represented by the ethereal word OM. The sound of OM resembles the reverberations caused by the resonating sound emanating from a large bell, a sound which is in a continuous stream of vibrations much like the uninterrupted stream of oil flowing down a smooth surface¹, and which lies beyond the restrictions imposed by the physical characteristics of the symbol of OM having a Bindu, Naad and Kalaa (here referring to the sign of ‘Chandra Bindu’—the crescent-shaped moon with the dot on top—placed above the symbol of OM. [That is, when the spiritual aspirant is able to experience the vibrations of ether in his meditative state, the center of his brain which receives sensory perceptions from the external world is overtaken by the resonance of

sound that prevails in the cosmic ether so much so that none of the impulses of the external world are able to disturb his inner peace and tranquility. He remains in a state of perpetual bliss and ecstasy because his mind becomes oblivious to the turmoil in the surrounding world. This rare and unique state of existence that is witnessed by seasoned ascetics is tantamount to having witnessed the supreme conscious 'Self' that is beyond the purview of the mundane world, and is immune to all delusions and the entrapping web that this world casts.] (37).

[Note—¹The 'smooth surface' here refers to the cosmic ether in which the Naad has had its origin in the form of the cosmic waves, oscillating in regular frequency which generated sufficient energy that in turn produced the cosmic sound identified by and encrypted in the word OM. The calm surface of this ether is the tranquil state of existence that goes beyond the mundane life full of restlessness and turmoil, and the presence of 'consciousness' in this state of existence is symbolised by the energy of the waves that create an oscillation in the cosmic ether. The best way to experience this phenomenon is to stand on the beach beside an ocean during the night when a continuous and indefinable roar is heard in the distance. This 'distant' roar is symbolic of Naad. It is also heard when one closes one's ears with the fingers. When one is asked to describe the type of sound heard, there is only one word which would give an idea of how it sounds, and it is OM pronounced in a subtle but resounding manner when one hums this monosyllabic word OM. Refer also to verse no. 2-3, 102 also.]

38. Even as a man can suck in water through the bore of the straw, the expert ascetic is able to draw his vital winds called Prans while steadily practicing meditation, especially Pranayam, and divert them upwards (i.e. he is able to rise above the mundane and attain a higher state of exalted existence when his vital energy and life forces are diverted towards his spiritual elevation instead of being frittered away in worldly pursuits) (38).

39. A wise and seasoned practitioner of meditation should make efforts to symbolically suck up the divine subtle energy present in the Kundalini (the coiled energy center present at the base of the spine) that is to be treated as a 'well or fount' of cosmic energy, by the path of the symbolic straw represented by the stalk of the divine Lotus present in his subtle heart (i.e. through the duct or Naadi, called the Sushumna Naadi, passing up from the mouth of the Kundalini, through the center of the spine, and reaching up to the top of the head), and using the Ardha Matra of OM (i.e. the resonating sound produced in the mind after the mouth is closed and the sound of the word OM is continued with a prolonged humming) as the force to do the pulling-up of this energy just like water is drawn up from a deep well¹ by the means of a rope and bucket (or a liquid is sucked up through the means of a straw).

The pulled-up energy from the Kundalini should then be focused in the center of the eyebrows² (39).

[Note—¹It is to be noted here that this 'humming sound' resembles the working of an electric water pump that is used to pull up water from deep bore wells. The pipes used for this purpose are like the Naadi called Sushumna through which the energy of the Kundalini is being pulled up, the Kundalini itself is the underground water reservoir, and the energy being concentrated in the forehead is like filling of the overhead water tank with this pulled-up water. As is obvious in this example, the underground water reservoir is of no use unless the water is easily available and made distributable as when it is stored in an overhead tank.

²In other words, the practitioner should endeavour to use his meditative exercises to concentrate his subtle energy, which was hitherto locked inside the Kundalini and now released by meditation practices, in the region of the forehead between the two eyebrows where the faculty of intellect and discrimination is located. It is believed that this spot is the place where the symbolic 'third eye of wisdom' is located. This 'eye' has the same powerful impact and the same penetrating powers in the field of metaphysics and spiritualism that the beam of laser has in modern science. The small triangle formed at this spot, i.e. at the tri-junction of the two eyebrows and the root of the nose, is called the Trikona in verse no. 95.]

40. The spot of the forehead between the two eyebrows and the root of the nose is the place where the supreme Brahman is said to have his symbolic abode. This is the place where the elixir of eternity and bliss, called Amrit, is located¹ (40).

[Note—¹Refer verse no. 95, 103-106 below. This spot is called the spot of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment in the body. When the ascetic is able to concentrate his mental energy here, he is able to attain supernatural powers to see even things not visible to naked eyes just like the x-rays that can penetrate the skin and see the bones behind them. It is like generating powerful laser rays of spiritual energy which enables the practitioner of Yoga to penetrate the outer shell and see behind; it gives him mystical powers of deep insight. He becomes so engrossed in this concentration that he forgets about anything else much like the bee which is sucking nectar from the flower. This is a metaphoric way of saying that he experienced utmost bliss when his attention is focused here at this point. Besides this, it is here in the mind—more precisely in the hollow of the skull—that he hears the reverberations of the cosmic Naad while he repeats the Mantra OM as described in verse no. 103-106 below. These cosmic vibrations soothe down his nerves by subtly massaging them, and as a consequence he experiences unprecedented ecstasy and bliss.]

41. The six limbs of Yoga are said to be the following—Aasan (sitting posture), Pranayam (breath control), Pratyahar (withdrawal of the mind and its control), Dhaarna (having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path), Dhyan (contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect), and Samadhi (a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation) (41).

[Note—Refer Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 6, and Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 16-42.]

42. The numbers of Aasans (sitting postures) of Yoga are as numerous as the number of species of living creatures in this creation. Thus, there are hundreds of such sitting postures, and they are all known to Lord Shiva (42).

[Note—This is a very significant observation. It means that all the creatures, no matter to which plane of existence it belongs to or where it lies in the evolutionary ladder, can do meditation and contemplation in order to obtain the benefit of spiritual liberation and deliverance. It is not necessary that only humans have the birth-right to do Yoga and obtain spiritual liberation, but they only have an advantage of an advanced faculty of the mind and intellect as well as the privilege of being able to read the scriptures and seek advice of those who have had a first-hand experience of pitfalls of such practices and precautions to be taken to avoid them. After all, spiritual emancipation and salvation is open to all forms of life because all forms have the same divine soul in them just like

each human being has a right to education and knowledge but only a limited ratio of the population takes advantage of this right, and even amongst them only a handful make good and fruitful use of this privilege.]

43. The four main Aasans or sitting postures during meditation are the following—Siddha¹, Bhadra², Singha³ and Padma⁴.

The two subtle energy centers at the lower end of the body are the Muladhar Chakra⁵ and Swadisthan Chakra⁶ (43).

[Note—(1) The *Aasan* is the sitting posture adopted by a practitioner of Yoga (meditation) in order to concentrate his mind and vital energies of the body to obtain success in his spiritual pursuit or obtain access to the boundless source of subtle energy lying untapped inside his own body for acquiring mystical powers and deep insight into the para-natural. Successful accomplishment of Yoga is dependent upon such sitting postures because they are like specific instruments to be employed by a student of any particular discipline of science in order to obtain success in his experiments, and at the same time are like strict regimes to be followed by him for this success. Some of the other Upanishads that describe the prominent Aasans in great detail are the following—Yogchudamani and Jabal Darshan of the Sam Veda tradition, and Mandal Brahmin of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. The Amritnaad Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition also deals with them.

¹The *Siddha Aasan*—To sit in this posture, the two legs are first stretched out. The left leg is bent at the knee and folded in so that the heel touched the genitals and the sole lies flat against the inner thighs of the right leg. Then the right leg is folded in and the heel is placed in front of the pubic bone and the sole touches the inner thigh of the previously folded left leg. The two hands are stretched out and the outer side of the wrist of each hand is placed on the bent knee-joint of the respective side. The palm is opened and the thumb is touched by the bent first finger to form a virtual ring, with the remaining three fingers held straight out. The practitioner sits perfectly in a ram-rod straight position, with the spine, the neck and the head in a straight line. The mental sight is fixed on a spot in front of the nose, and this state of intense concentration is maintained as long as is feasible for the practitioner. Then the legs are gradually unfolded and after some period of relaxation, the process is repeated with the opposite leg being folded in first and placed below the other leg. It is believed that this posture is one of the best postures to be adopted for Yoga amongst the eighty four lakh (84×10^5) postures of meditation. This Siddha Aasan is capable of cleansing all the seventy two thousand Naadis (ducts in the body), and is so-called because it is possible to access the divine source of cosmic energy trapped inside the body as well as experience the cosmic power of the kindled Spirit by employing this Aasan. The word 'Siddha' implies one who has acquired stupendous mystical and supernatural powers that are beyond the parameters of the physical and mundane world.

²The *Bhadra Aasan*—To sit in a posture by placing the two ankle joints under the buttocks on either side of the suture, i.e. the junction point of the testicles and the anus such that they (the two ankle joints) touch each other, and then using the hands to firmly clasp the soles from the back side of the buttock, is called 'Bhadrasan'. This posture can neutralise the ill effects of all diseases which cause the production of toxins in the body (or which are caused by administration of poisons or other toxins in the body; it helps to get rid of diseases as well).

³The *Singha Aasan*—The sitting posture called 'Singhasan' is so named as it resembles the way a lion sits. It is this — tuck both the ankle joints (by folding the legs inwards and backwards) under the buttocks in such a way that the right ankle joint is to

the left of the suture, i.e. the left ankle joint is under the right buttock and the foot of this left leg protrudes out from below the buttock of the right leg. Similarly, the right leg is folded in and the ankle is tucked under the left buttock and the foot points out from under this buttock. Both the hands should be stretched out straight and the open palms kept on the knee of the corresponding side with the fingers spread out like a fork on that knee (i.e. left palm should rest facing down on the left knee and the right palm on the corresponding right knee of the bent leg, with outstretched fingers). Then, open the mouth wide, extending the tongue out as much as possible, and fix the attention and sight on the tip of the nose. This is a posture adored by ascetics (Yogis) and it is dedicated to the memory of Lord Narsingh, the half man and half lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu to liberate his great child devotee Prahalad from the torments inflicted upon him by his own demon father. Amongst the benefits of this Aasan is that it clears the voice and removes foul breath.

⁴The *Padma Aasan*—This is to sit in a Lotus posture. It is also regarded as one of the most widely practiced posture of Yoga because of its ease and sustainability. This entails to sit crossed-legged in such a way that the foot of the left leg rests on the upper and inner part of the thigh of the right leg, and vice versa. The spine, neck and head are in a ram-rod straight position, and the hands, with palms facing upwards and resting one on the top of the other, are placed on the folded legs in front of the navel region.

(2) The *Chakras* are the various subtle energy centers present in the body. According to Yoga texts, when the vital energy trapped in these Chakras are activated, a person acquires immense potentials, including spiritual and mystical powers. They have been elaborately described in Upanishads dealing with Yoga and mystical forms of ritualistic worship involving meditative practices in order to enable to practitioner acquire astounding mystical and supernatural powers. Refer Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad, Canto 3 of Rig Veda tradition, as well as Yograjo, Yogchudamani and Jabal Darshan Upanishads (Canto 4) of the Sam Veda tradition.

⁵The *Muladhar Chakra*—It is located between genitals and anus, in the region known as the perineum.

⁶The *Swadisthan Chakra*—It is located in the groins of males and the Bhug area of females. It has a 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed and its counterpart in the female is the clitoris.]

44-45. Between these two (Muladhar and Swadhisthan Chakras) is located the area (site) responsible for reproduction. It is called the 'Kaamroop'¹ because it is a personification of such qualities as passion, lust and desires that a creature has.

At the base of the anus there is a Chakra shaped like a Lotus with four petals. In the center of this is located the famous center of cosmic creative energy called 'Kamakhya'. This is adored by acclaimed practitioner (because it has the same potential to 'create' that is also possessed by the supreme Lord of creation).

To the front of this Kamakhya is the male organ present outside the body in the anterior side of the anus (44-45).

[Note—¹This is called the *Kaamroop Peeth* in terms of the Tantra Yoga.

The word *Peeth* means a seat or pedestal for an idol of a deity. In the metaphysical context, it refers to the four sheaths which form the body that harbours the Atma of the creature at its center. These four sheaths are—the Annamaye Kosh or food sheath, the Pranmaye Kosh or the wind sheath, the Manomaye Kosh or the mind sheath, and Vigyanmaye Kosh or the intellect sheath.

The subtle heart of a creature is shaped like a divine Lotus where the supreme Lord known as Vishnu, the personified form of the Viraat Purush who is the infinite, invisible, all-encompassing and all-pervading macrocosmic gross body of the supreme transcendental Brahm, is honorably seated. This subtle heart is located inside the 'self' of the spiritual aspirant himself. Refer Dhyan Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 27-28.

According to Tantra Shastra, the Peeths are said to be the places where the Shakti (cosmic dynamic energy of creation) is located in the body which itself is regarded as the temple of Shiva (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 168), and of both Shiva and Vishnu as representatives of Brahm on the one hand and of Shakti and Laxmi as representative of Brahm's cosmic dynamic and active principle on the other (Canto 5, verse no. 4). The body is also regarded as a holy city or pilgrim site where these four Peeths or temples of Shakti are located (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 2-4). There are four such Peeths as follows—The first seat or Peeth is called Kaam Roop Peeth, the second seat called Purna Giri Peeth, the third seat is called Jalandhar Peeth, and the fourth seat is called Uddyan/Udiyan Peeth.

These Peeths or seats and their locations have been described in verse nos. 170-175 of Canto 1, and verse nos. 8-15 of Canto 5 of Yogshikha Upanishad belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

46-47. There is a self-illuminated center of light resembling a priceless gem, symbolising the fount of a natural source of wisdom, intelligence, thoughts and discrimination. A person who is well acquainted with it is said to be an expert in Yoga.

Located at a distance measuring the width of four fingers from the epicenter of the fire element (called the Kundalini located at the base of the spine) and below the pubic bone is situated the Gonad (the testicles in the male), the organ which produces the cells responsible for reproduction. It is symbolically radiant and glowing like the hue of molten gold, and brilliant and splendorous like the dazzling streak of electric. [That is, it is a center of a very powerful source of dynamic creative energy that has the potential to generate new life in the form of a new creature from one single cell of the mother, i.e. the egg, and one from the father, i.e. the sperm. The metaphors of the 'molten gold' and 'electric' are used here to indicate the stupendous energy and dynamism of creation that is concentrated in this part of the body. If the forehead is the site for wisdom and erudition, this lower end of the body, i.e. the gonad, is equally important if the creation is to be perpetuated.

The Swadhisthan Chakra is at the base of this center (46-47).

48-49. The area of the Swadhisthan Chakra is called the pelvic region. This site has the vital wind (the Apaana Vayu) and it is illuminated like a gem. [This is because it is the centre of the body harbouring such glorious centers of energy as the Kundalini, the Swadhisthan Chakra, the Muladhara Chakra and the reproductive organs.]

The Manipurak Chakra is situated in the region of the navel. It is shaped like a Lotus having twelve petals. It is the area that controls 'Punya' and 'Paap' done by an individual. In other words, it is the center that controls life in as much as it is through it that the embryo draws nourishment from the mother through the placenta, and being so nourished it develops and takes birth as a creature that does this and that deed in this physical world. Each deed done by him is classified as either good or bad, the former being called 'Punya' or something categorised as auspicious and noble, and the other is

called 'Paap' or something demoted to the lowly class of sins and inauspiciousness (48-49).

50-51. It is only till the time that the living being is not aware of the essential truths behind these organs that he remains trapped in the whirlpool or net of delusions and ignorance¹.

Above the region of the perineum and below the navel is the cluster of Naadis (ducts in the body; the nerves and veins) called the 'Kanda' (literally meaning a root like structure like the sweet potato or carrot or radish). It is from here that seventy two thousand Naadis originate. From amongst them, there are seventy two Naadis that are more important (50-51).

[Note--¹That is, till the time a man does not understand that the reproductive organs are meant to carry forward the legacy of the supreme Brahm in the way of procreation, and are not at all meant for sexual indulgences and gratification of carnal desires of the body, he remains trapped in ignorance-induced delusions and swept off in its tide. That is, he foolishly thinks that his sexual organs are meant for sexual enjoyments, pleasures and self-gratifications instead of realising that they are tools to participate in the cosmic scheme of creation. This eclectic thinking should be natural to a wise and enlightened man because he is deemed to be one who is aware that he is not an ordinary mortal creature but Brahm personified. The sexual organs are meant to fulfill some divine mandate and not for indulgence and sexual enjoyments. Refer note no. 3 of verse no. 36 above.]

So as soon as this wisdom dawns in his mind, he begins to see his own self as a personification of the Supreme Being capable of generating new forms of life in the form of his offspring almost from scratch, besides creating this colourful and many-faceted world of magnificent charms and sights. He makes new discoveries, new innovations, improves on and adds to what the original creator has created in some earlier time. In other words, he possesses the same 'creative and generating' powers and potentials as possessed by the Supreme Being. This is exactly the main purpose of the great teachings of the Vedas and Upanishads—to kindle self realisation in the man and make him realise that he is not an ordinary mortal like other ordinary creatures in this creation who are destined to lead a life ending in death and rebirth depending on what that creature has done in its previous life, but someone specially privileged and endowed to get an opportunity to charter his own course of redemption and salvation which no other forms can do with the same ease that is available to him.]

52-53. Out of these (seventy two Naadis) there are only ten main Naadis through which the Pran (vital life giving forces present inside the body) move or pulsate. They are the following—Ida, Pingla, Sushumna, Gandhari, Haritjivha, Pusa, Yashaswani, Alumbusa, Kuhu, and Shankhini (52-53).

[Note—Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 15-17, and Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 13-17 of Sam Veda tradition.]

54-57. Practitioners of Yoga are expected to have a thorough knowledge of these Naadi network. The three main Naadis amongst these are the Ida, Pingla and Sushumna, and the vital life known as Pran continuously pulsates and moves inside them. The patron God of Ida Naadi is Sun, of Pingla is Moon, and of Sushumna is Fire.

The Sushumna is in the center of the other two Naadis, the Ida being to its left and Pingla to its right. These three Naadis are like the highway through which the Pran moves.

The ten vital winds in the body are called Pran. They are the following—Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana, Vyaana, Naaga, Kurma, Krikan, Devdutta, and Dhananjaya. Out of them, the first five are the chief Prans while the last five are subsidiary Prans¹ (54-57).

[Note--¹According to various Upanishads, especially the Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad, 1/5 and 2/77-87, and Paingalo-panishad, cantos 2, verse nos. 3 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, the 'Pran' (vital wind) is classified into ten types depending upon the function that the wind element performs in the body of a creature. Amongst them, there are five winds which are considered more important than the rest. As such, these five are called the main 'Pran', or 'Panch Prans', and they are the following:--(1) Pran, the wind element, as breath, that is exhaled as well as inhaled, and which is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without life no other wind would be of any significance to the creature; (2) Apaana, the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys); (3) Samaana, the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood; (4) Udaana, the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough; and (5) Vyaana, the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

Besides the above, there are five subsidiary winds which act more like assistants to the chief Prans. They are:-- (1) Naaga—this junior wind which helps in exhaling breath and belching; (2) Kurma—this subsidiary wind helps the eyelids to open and shut; (3) Krikan—this creates the sensation of hunger; (4) Devdutta—this creates sleep; and (5) Dhananjaya—it prevents decay and deformation of the body immediately after death for some time.

According to Subala Upanishad, canto 9, verse no.1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, these ten winds have the following functions—(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaana—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyaana—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaana—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Samaana—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambha—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antarayama—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naaga—this controls the 'Chitta' or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

Location of the five chief vital winds, called the Panch Prans, in the body—(1) Pran—it is present in the mouth, nose, heart, navel, big toe of the leg; (2) Apaana—it is present in the intestines and anus, lower abdomen, thighs, knees; (3) Samaana—it is uniformly present throughout the body; (4) Udaana—it is present in the hands, legs, joints of the body; and (5) Vyaana—it is located in the ears, thighs, waist, heels, shoulders, throat. The subsidiary winds as listed above, i.e. Naaga, Kurma, Krikan, Devdutta and Dhananjaya are located in the skin, muscles and the bones.

Besides the Upanishad mentioned above, there are others that elaborately describe the vital winds, their locations, their functions, how they are satisfied, along with their significance. The chief amongst them are (1) Chandogya Upanishad in its canto 3, sections 13-18; canto 5, sections 19-23 (describes how the five winds are satisfied); and canto 7, section 15, (2) Jabal Darshan Upanishad, canto 4, verse no.23-24 of the Sam Veda tradition, (3) Maitrayanu Upanishad, canto 2, verse no.6-7 of the same Veda (which describes the functions of these winds), (4) Subalo Upanishad, canto 9, verse no.1-14, (5) Paingalo-panishad, canto 2, verse no.3 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, and (6) Amritnado-panishad, verse no. 33-38 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. These vital winds have also been elucidated upon in sage Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no.38-39.]

58. The subtle vital forces of life called Pran collectively move and oscillate in these thousands of Naadis, injecting life or 'Pran' into the otherwise lifeless gross body of the creature. The living beings move up and down under the influence of the Pran and Apaana respectively¹ (58).

[Note—¹In metaphysical terms this means that they attain spiritual upliftment when their Pran is more active, while they get demoted to the mundane world of lowly life marked by grossness and inertia when the Apaana wind is more active. In more physical terms the movement of Pran refers to the process of breathing, while the movement of Apaana refers to the peristaltic movement that helps the food to move down the intestines. The breath (Pran) which brings in fresh oxygen-laden air inside the body and helps to rejuvenate the tissues on the one hand and removes toxic gases and other lighter waste products of the body when it is exhaled, and the movement of food in the alimentary canal, its digestion and expulsion of waste products from the body governed by the Apaana wind are both essential and indispensable parts of life because no life can survive without either of them.]

59-61. The Pran (here referring to the breath passing through the nostrils when one breathes) moves sometimes through the path which goes to the left (of the central Sushumna Naadi, i.e. through the Ida Naadi passing up to the left nostril), and sometimes through the one that goes to the right (of the central Sushumna Naadi, i.e. through the Pingla Naadi passing up to the right nostril). The Pran wind is so subtle and sublime that it cannot be visibly seen.

Just like a ball thrown at random by the player moves restlessly in various directions, bouncing here and there and changing its course every now and then unpredictably, the creature is also buffeted and kicked around (like the ball)¹ by the two prominent winds called the Pran and Apaana, and he moves restlessly in so many places (and in so many wombs or takes so many births).

The tug and pull of these two winds on the creature is much like a bird being pulled down by the string tied to its legs while it attempts to fly off in the sky². An ascetic who is well acquainted with this fact is regarded as really wise and enlightened.

While the Pran leaves the body it makes a sound equivalent to the Sanskrit alphabet 'Ha' (equivalent to the sound made while pronouncing *her*; this is the sound made in the throat whilst one exhales breath with mouth open). On the other hand when it is taken in, it makes the sound of the Sanskrit alphabet 'Sa' (equivalent to the sound made while pronouncing *sir*; this is heard when one inhales air through the clenched teeth but open mouth). [Refer verse no. 24 also.] (59-61).

[Note—¹The same idea has been described in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 27-28 of Sam Veda tradition. It says—“Just like a ball or balloon being thrown or kicked around by players, a creature (an individual) cannot remain stable and steady for long because it is under the spell of Pran, Apan and other vital winds which constantly keep it restless, agitated, always mobile and fidgety and in a state of constant flux (27).

The creature, under the buffeting influence or thrust of the vital winds or airs, is compelled to move upwards or downwards, to the left and to the right (like an air-filled balloon) so swiftly that it loses its bearings and does not know what is happening to it (28) [27-28]”.

These winds slap and dash against the sail of a ship on a high sea, as it were, tossing and turning it with the lashing of every gust. The creature cannot sit quietly and calmly in the ship because these vital wind forces continue to flap and flutter the sail, whipping the ship recklessly in the churning waters of the sea represented by this world.

The creature's body is like the balloon or a football, as it is filled with air called the vital winds. Even as a balloon or an air-filled light ball moves with the slightest touch, is easily tossed about violently in a squall or gale and it cannot remain at a single point for long even when there is no apparent breeze blowing, the creature also has an inbuilt and inherent natural tendency to be always on the move, remain restless and be fidgety. The biggest proof of this fact is witnessed when a dead body is observed. All the rest of the organs of a body while it was alive are present in a corpse, the only imperceptible element which has left the body is 'Pran' or the vital wind. The corpse becomes heavy than a living man and it lies motionless if it is not moved by others; it has no capacity to move on its own and it becomes heavy like lead. So it is clear that it was the 'Pran' that made the body light weight, agile and active much like the air-filled balloon or ball. Once the Pran leaves the body, the latter becomes heavy as lead.

The creature is flung around so rapidly in quick succession in waves of emotions and sentiments originating in its heart and mind due to the various influences of the external world that it is not able to discern and make out what is transpiring. It becomes completely disoriented in the topsy-turvy path of transmigration. It does not get a chance to bring itself together and realise who it is, what it truly is, where does it belong, what is the correct direction it should take and which direction it is actually heading to, where should it go and where it should not. Taking the example of a boat in a stormy high sea, the harried creature is so rapidly hurled and tossed about like a ball and thrown over board that it is more concerned with grabbing any float at hand just to avoid getting drowned than to focus on long term spiritual goals of life. Its immediate concern is the survival in the next moment, and not the moment beyond the first. Another good example would be a balloon or a dry leaf or a kite caught in a storm. There is no need to elaborate what happens to them. The allegory will aptly summarise the comic but alarming situation the trapped creature faces.

²The analogy of the *bird* is used here to emphasise the point that the creature has a natural tendency to remain free like the bird, but it allows itself to be tied voluntarily in shackles of delusions pertaining to this world out of its own ignorance, and its unending greed and desires, and gets trapped as a result much like the bird which falls for the trap laid for it by the cunning bird-catcher. The tug and pull in the world with its astounding variety of magnificent charms and fascinating colours, no matter how transient and horrifying they are in the long run, are nevertheless very enthralling and captivating for the time being for the creature, and the latter has no inclination to look ahead and see the horrendous consequences of falling for them. This is the 'downward pull of the Apan wind', used here in a metaphoric way because it is this wind that moves down the body through the intestines and helps to push the eaten food down the alimentary canal and out through the anus. On the other hand, the Pran moves in the upwards directions as is

obvious when we observe the breath which moves out of the lungs and goes up to the nostril to be exhaled. This 'upwards movement of the Pran' is a metaphoric way of saying that the creature is seeking spiritual upliftment, it is 'looking up'.]

62-63. Since these two alphabets 'Ha' and 'Sa' form the word 'Hans'¹ meaning a divine Swan (representing the immaculate, uncorrupted, untainted and divine Brahm, and implying the constant assertion of the creature that he is as immaculate and pure as the Swan representing this Brahm), it is deemed that all the living beings (here referring to the human beings and other creatures who breathe air specially) are constantly doing Japa (repetition) of the divine Mantra pertaining to the supreme Brahm. This Japa is done involuntarily and automatically approximately twenty one thousand six hundred times because this is the number of times one breathes during the course of a day consisting one day and night².

This is equivalent to doing Japa using the famous and most acclaimed Gayatri Mantra as far as the Yogi who is a well established, wise, erudite and enlightened ascetic or any other practitioner of meditation and contemplation is concerned. This automatic Japa of the Mantra 'Hans-Hans' repeatedly and incessantly by the ascetic provides him the same benefit of emancipation and salvation that is obtained by repeating the Mantra of Gayatri³ (62-63).

[Note—¹The concept of "Hansa" has been described in note to verse no. 24 above in this Upanishad. This verse says that the supreme transcendental Brahm known also as cosmic Consciousness resides in all the living beings in the form of a Hans or a divine Swan. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the divine swan, but he was unaware of his divinity and sublimity, his exalted stature, till that was pointed out to him in this verse. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must do not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan.

The Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 82-83 of Sam Veda tradition describes this Swan in the context of Yoga. Let us see what it has to say in this context—"The 'Hans' (literally a divine swan) resides gloriously and majestically in the center of the two eyes of a creature during the waking state of consciousness. The letter 'Sa' (सकारः) of the Hindi/Sanskrit alphabet represents the 'Khechari Mudra' of the Yogi which is certainly the personification or the image of the word 'Twam' (82).

The letter 'Ha' (हकारः) represents the supreme Lord of creation, called 'Parmeshwar' which is certainly symbolised or represented by the word 'Tat'. That is, the two syllables of the word 'Hans', meaning the divine swan, are 'Han' (हं) and 'Sa' (स) which stand for the two words of metaphysics which have profound impact—the 2nd word is 'Twam' and the 1st is 'Tat' corresponding to these two syllables respectively. Any person who concentrates his mind and attention, and contemplates and meditates upon the letter 'Sa' shall surely become akin to, or equivalent to the form or the image represented by the letter 'Ha'. This is called contemplating upon and practicing of the twin tenets of 'So-a-ham' and 'Tattwa-masi' (83) [82-83]."

The Upanishadic sage establishes uniformity and oneness with the two great philosophies and metaphysical concepts of the scriptures—"So-a-ham" which means 'that is me', and 'Tattwa-masi' which means 'the essence is pure consciousness and it is me'. The word 'that' refers to Brahma which is the universal and absolute Truth and Reality about the existence, and has the qualities, inter alia, of enlightenment, of being eternal,

omnipotent, universal, omnipresent, immanent, omniscient etc. When the seeker/aspirant focuses his attention on the self represented by the letter 'Sa' (self) and the 'Khechhari Mudra' (when he is unconscious of the external world and focuses his attention on the glorious supreme entity present in the center of his eyebrows), he realises the truth of the maxim 'So-a-ham'. When he opens his eyes of wisdom, the truth of the 2nd tenet 'Tattwa-masi' dawns on him. Put simply, it means that the creature realises that 'he is the same as the supreme Brahma who resides in his Atma/soul present in his bosom/heart'. At the same time, 'the external world seen through this eye of wisdom symbolised by the presence of the divine swan in his eyes is the same Brahma who has revealed himself in this multifarious, diverse and myriad world'. This is the essential truth, or 'Tattwa'.

Refer Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 61-64, 78-79.

²The Amrit Naad Upanishad says that a living being breathes 1, 13, 680 times during the course of a day and night.

³The *Gayatri Mantra* has two versions which are presented here. According to one version, it is based on the typical 'Gayatri Chanda' which is a poetical composition consisting of three stanzas or lines each having eight letters or syllables. The total number of letters or syllables is thus twenty four. The Gayatri extolled by Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14 is the one strictly conforming to this rule. On the other hand, the usual and commonly known Gayatri Mantra has four steps or stanzas and is based on the composition style called the 'Anushtup Chanda'.

The 'Gayatri Chanda' is used to compose the sacred hymns of the Vedas. Amongst the different composition styles, this is regarded as the best style of Chanda in which the Vedas were revealed (Jaimini Brahmin, 2/227) because it has the divine virtue and supernatural powers that provides protection to the Pran of the person who says the Gayatri Chanda and elevates his stature to that of the celestial Sun.

Let us first see the typical *Gyatri Chand pattern* of this divine Mantra. The Gayatri Mantra based on the style of this poetical composition is described in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14, of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. This Mantra having three steps is extolled as the one which is superior to other forms of the Gayatri Mantra having four steps because this three-stepped Mantra is synonymous with Pran, i.e. it is the life or the essence of all that exists.

The Gayatri Mantra having three lines is the following—"Tatsaviturvarnyam Dhimahi Dhiyo Yo Naha Prachodayat". The fourth line honours and glorifies this Gayatri as a manifestation of the Sun God, and as brilliant and splendid as it. It is--"Paro Rajase Suvarnam". Since the Sun is a visible manifestation of the supreme Brahm who is the Transcendental Consciousness of the entire creation at the macro level, having the Atma resident in the bosom of the individual creature as its micro level counterpart and Pran as its subtle manifestation, the Gayatri Mantra is in honour of the supreme Authority of creation, i.e. Brahm.

Now the question arises that if the three lines are the complete Mantra, then what was the purpose of including the fourth line? It must be especially noted in this context here that this fourth step or leg of the Gayatri Mantra does not consist of any word which is a part of the main Mantra, but is only meant to establish its divine stature as the citadel for all spiritual Mantras; it is intended to give this Gayatri its place of honour in the pantheon of divine Mantras. Besides this, the fourth leg is visualised as a symbol of stability because anything that has four legs is more stable and steady as compared to one with only three.

Therefore, last stanza is like an epithet highlighting the magnificent divinity and spiritual value of the Gayatri Mantra. It is akin to the Sun shining in the sky, and all other planets and their satellites such as the moon shine because they reflect this light from their surface. The Sun is at the centre of the solar system even as the Gayatri is at the

symbolic hub of all divinity and spiritually empowered Mantras. It is also akin to the Pran which supports life in a gross body of a creature and is an acronym for life as a whole. The Pran symbolically illuminates the dark realm of the body from the inside while the Sun does the same from the outside.

The actual Gayatri Mantra that should be preached to the spiritual aspirant consists of the first three steps as described in verse nos. 1-3 of Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14.

This famous Mantra is dedicated to the Sun God who is a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm. It is this Mantra—which is a group of ethereal words having profound spiritual value and metaphysical importance. It is called Gayatri because it gave protection to the Pran--Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14, verse no. 4. It has been accepted as a manifestation of Pran in Shatpath Brahmin, 1/3/5/15, while it is praised as having the potentials of Agni (fire) present in the faculty of speech known as Vak in Taittiriya Sanhita, 3/2/9/3, as Tej (energy) in Shatpath Brahmin, 1/8/2/13, and as Brahm (the supreme transcendental consciousness) in Maitri Brahmin, 4/3/1. According to the Purans (mythological histories of the Hindus), the Gayatri has been praised having manifested in the form of the Trinity Gods—Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder--Skanda Puran, Kashi Khand, Purva, 4/9/58. Whatever that exists is a revelation of Gayatri because it is a manifestation of Brahm—Chandogya Upanishad, 3/12/1. In fact this whole earth that gives refuge to all the life forms in this world is a manifestation of Gayatri-- Chandogya Upanishad, 3/12/2. By worshipping it, a person is blessed with worldly assets such as abundant livestock and flourishing family, a long, healthy and active life, wealth and fortunes, good name and fame, as well as spiritual attainment in the form of Brahm realisation—Atharva Veda, 19/71/1.

The Gayatri Mantra has been expounded and elucidated upon in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14 and other Upanishads, such as the Savitri Upanishad which is entirely dedicated to it, the Maitrayanyu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 7, and the Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 3, Section 12, verse nos. 1-9 belonging to the Sam Veda tradition. Besides these, the Gayatri Upanishad appears as eight assorted verses or Kandikas numbering 31-38 of the Gopath Brahmin belonging to the Atharva Veda.

It has been said in the scriptures that Brahmins, the highest class amongst the humans and who are regarded as the most learned and wise amongst them, were born from Gayatri, thereby drawing a parallel between the highest stature and exalted standing of Brahmins amongst the creatures and the Gayatri amongst the hymns. It is pertinent to note here by the way that Kshatriyas, the warrior class, were born from the Chanda known as Trishtup, and Vaishya, the trading class, from the Chanda known as Jagati. In other words, the divine and eclectic powers encrypted in the Trishtup Chanda revealed themselves as the Kshatriya, and those of the Jagati as the Vaishya. The Trishtup Chanda has four lines each having eleven letters or syllables, totaling forty four letters or syllables in all, while the Jagati Chanda has six lines with eight letters or syllables each, totaling to forty eight letters or syllables.

(b) According to some schools of philosophy, the Gayatri Mantra composed in the style of an Anushtup Chanda is to be worshipped. Therefore, the Mantra according to this school of thinking is the following--‘OM BHURBHUVAHA SVAHA¹, TATSAVIURVARENYAM², BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAH³, DHIYO YO NAH PRACODAYAT⁴’. It means ‘OM is the supreme, transcendental Brahm. He is the lord of creation of the terrestrial, the celestial and heavenly worlds. I offer my oblations to you. That Brahm is luminous like the sun. He is excellent, the best, the most exalted, a destroyer of sins, and a divine entity. May he imbibe, infuse and inspire our intellect with wisdom and enlightenment so that we are purified and move on the righteous and noble

path'. The four phrases of the Gayatri Mantra are clearly marked by small numerals in this Mantra. This Mantra appears in the Rig Veda (3/62/10), the Sam Veda (1462), and Yajur Veda (3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/6).]

64-65. When the wise and erudite ascetic or any spiritual aspirant gives this sound of breath (i.e. the sound of Ha + Sa as described in verse nos. 61-63) going out of the body and coming in it the same importance, the same significance, the same respect, the same dignity and the same honour that any eclectic and divine Mantra (such as the famous Gayatri Mantra or any other Mantra for that matter) is given, then this sound of breath ('Hans') gives him the same benefit as any other famous Mantra.

He is able to obtain freedom from the ill effects of all sins and their evil consequences, and is able to reach and have access to the supreme state of Brahm realisation. There is no other Vidya (mystical knowledge and expertise) to match it; there is no Japa (repetition of a Mantra) equivalent to this constant and effortless repetition of the Mantra known as 'Hans'¹; and there is no other more auspicious deed than this (because it helps the man to focus his attention constantly, consistently and persistently on Divinity, and veer his mind away from this world of artificiality and delusions.

There is no Mantra as potential and holy as this subtle and sublime unspoken Mantra known as 'Hans'—there has never been and there would ever be (64-65).

[Note—¹This is because this Mantra Hans is repeatedly automatically when the man breathes—refer verse no. 61. Breathing is an effortless and natural exercise for a man, requiring no special attention, efforts, exertion and energy so much so that even an unconscious man or a sleeping man breathes just like when he was wide awake and active.]

66. The supreme source of divine cosmic energy is personified as a female deity (a Goddess) called the 'Parmeshwari'. [Here the term refers to the Kundalini¹ because it is the fount of this cosmic dynamic energy in creation inside the body.] This Parmeshwari representing the stupendous source of energy lies in a sleeping state or in a dormant state of existence, blocking the entrance or doorway to the pathway to Brahm realisation (called the 'Brahm-Dwar')².

This Parmeshwari is aroused or literally woken up from her sleep by the process of 'Vahni Yoga'³ or the meditative practice that is tantamount to doing a fire sacrifice in a symbolic way⁴ because it kindles the latent fire element inside the Kundalini. This process is aided by the strong will power of the mind called the Mana, and the proper channelising of the forces of the vital winds called the Maruts present inside the body by doing Pranayam and other exercises of Yoga (66).

[Note—¹*Kundalini*—The Kundalini is a coil-like center of subtle energy lying at the base of the spine. It is generally lying in a dormant state. By doing Yogic practices, the stupendous energy trapped in its coils can be released by the unplugging of its mouth which opens into the 'Sushumna' nerve. This energy then rises up the spinal cord and ultimately reaches the top of the head. The Yogi who practices this Kundalini activation, called 'Kundalini Jaagran', experiences brilliance and dazzle unmatched by any other experience.

²The *Brahm-Dwar* is the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi, the tubular duct running through the center of the spine and is regarded as the only duct that helps the expert ascetic to divert his vital winds upwards along with the subtle cosmic energy released from the Kundalini, upwards so that they reach the top of the head where the Brahm-

Randhra is located. This Brahm-Randhra is the hair-like slit on the top of the skull from where the supreme transcendental Brahm is said to have entered the gross body of the creature at the time of creation and had taken up his abode in the creature's mind and intellect in order to control his creation at the gross level and material plane of physical existence from there. According to the philosophy of Yoga, when an acclaimed practitioner of meditation and contemplation is able to concentrate his vital forces of life, i.e. the Pran and Atma, there, he experiences a closeness with this Supreme Being present in a subtle and imperceptible form at this spot. Finally, at the time of death, his Pran makes its exit, along with the Atma, his pure self or consciousness, from this point to merge with the wind or air element present in the vast cosmos outside the physical body. This is tantamount to the aspirant's final liberation and deliverance because then this Pran would not have to reenter any other body as it has merged and got itself lost permanently in the elements of Nature, losing its individuality.

Usually the lower end of this Brahm-Dwar (represented by the Sushumna Naadi) is blocked by the mouth of the Kundalini. The thrust of Yoga practice, especially the Vahni Yoga is to un-block it by opening the Kundalini's mouth and releasing the latter's cosmic energy into this pathway.

Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 36 of Sam Veda tradition describes this pathway.

³*Vahni Yoga*—It deals with the activation of the vital wind/air with the fire/energy of life. For it, various techniques, processes, postures and exercises have been prescribed in Yoga, the chief among them being the activation of the Kundalini by Pranayam. The 'fire' required to heat and activates the 'Apaan' wind and push it upwards comes from the 'Sun Chakra' or the 'Surya Chakra' (subtle energy center) located in the region of the navel. It is done by 'Surya Pranayam'. During this meditative practice, it is imagined that leaping flames are flaring up from the core of the sun symbolically residing in the navel of the Yogi, and these flames are virtually heating the Sushumna nerve (also called the pathway leading to Brahm) as well as the other vital winds present in the lungs, the heart, throat etc. By heating the lower end of the Sushumna nerve, which is akin to heating one end of a heating rod or coil, alongside the heating of the Kundalini and the Apaana wind, the opening of this Sushumna nerve, which was up till now blocked, is unclogged and the subtle energy of the coiled Kundalini, which was hereto before trapped inside it, is released and pushed up by the Apaana wind into the spinal cord through this Sushumna nerve where it rises up through this channel right up to the mind or the top of the head, mixing with it all other winds en-route, collecting all their impurities with it, much like the hot air above the surface of the earth developing into whirlwind and rising up into the atmosphere, taking up along with it the dust particles, dry leaves, twigs etc. as it goes up. This polluted wind is finally exhaled through the right and left nostrils during the process of Rechak. The rising of the Kundalini is similar to the rising of heated mercury in a thermometer. When the bulb is heated, the mercury shoots up. Here, when the Kundalini is heated, the energy trapped inside it rises up the Sushumna nerve.

Vahni Yoga is so-called because it stokes the latent fire energy lying dormant hitherto in the body of the spiritual aspirant by activating the vital winds, especially the warm Apaana wind present in the lower end of the intestines, and utilizing its powerful force to stoke and activate the Kundalini, thereby heating it and releasing its subtle energy through the opening of its mouth covering the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi (nerve). This released energy then snakes up this Naadi and reaches the head, first at the root of the nose and center of the eyebrows and ultimately the top of the head at the point of the Brahm Randhra, the hair like slit on the skull, from which is finally escapes at the time of death of the ascetic, giving him liberation from the fetter of this body for ever. (Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 38 and 107 of Sam Veda tradition.)

⁴The Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 36-39 of Sam Veda tradition has an identical view which says—

“Verse no. 36—The ‘Kundalini energy’ is located above/at the top of the ‘Kanda’ in the form of a coil having eight spirals. It covers the mouth of ‘Brahm-Dwar’ (literally, the doorway leading to Brahm). It remains ever present, but dormant, in that place.

“Verse no. 37—The stupendously supreme, Goddess-like divine and sublime cosmic energy (i.e. Kundalini) remains dormant and in a sleeping state. It keeps the door or the entrance point of the channel leading to Brahm residing in the ‘Mana’ of a creature (the Brahm which lives in the realms of the mind and the intellect, the heart and the soul of the creature) blocked or closed or chocked by its own mouth. This entrance point is called ‘Brahma’s doorway’, which is actually the opening of the ‘Sushumna’ nerve. [The coil of Kundalini is like a serpent, with its hood blocking the lower end of the spinal cord like a plug in the neck of a bottle.]

“Verse no. 38—By the practice of ‘Vahni Yoga’ (literally, the ‘fire Yoga’) it becomes activated. Simply put, the ‘fuse’ is ignited by the subtle fire produced or kindled or stoked by Yoga to make this energy active and viable. Once activated, it assumes the form of ‘light’, and accompanied by (or pushed by or impelled by) a determined mind as well as the forceful push of the vital winds, it gradually snakes up or rises up the ‘Sushumna’ nerve (like a flexible needle snaking up the intestine or veins during a micro-hole surgery as done during endoscopy by a doctor).

“Verse no. 39—Even as a person can open the locks of the door to his house with a key, Yogis can open the door to liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation by the use of this Kundalini.

To understand the phenomenon, one can imagine a flexible probe or scope passing up one’s rectum during a medical process called endoscopy. The rectum and the lower intestine have a titillating experience as a result of the probe moving inside it. The entire process has been elaborately described in a note to verse no. 107 of this Upanishad.]

67-68. Upon being woken up, this Parmeshwari (i.e. the cosmic dynamic energy trapped in the Kundalini but now released in its subtle and sublime form) rises up and moves upwards the Sushumna path (i.e. this energy snakes up the Naadi called Sushumna), taking along with her the Mana (subtle mind) and the Pran (the vital wind forces in the body representing the spark of life and vitality that makes the creature move about and show signs of life) just like the needle takes the thread passing through it upwards when it is moved in that direction by the hand while sewing a cloth.

Wise, erudite and expert ascetics diligently and forcefully open the door leading to their liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle them to this body by releasing the trapped energy of the Kundalini just like a man opens a magical trapdoor of some mysterious citadel by clapping or knocking at it to summon the person inside the citadel to open the door for him¹ (67-68).

[Note—¹True form of liberation and deliverance for an enlightened ascetic implies the release of the ‘Pran’, i.e. the vital winds present in the body which are synonymous with ‘life’ in a creature, from the trap-like physical gross body upon its exit from the latter, and its merger with the primary air or wind element that is present outside the body, followed by the disintegration of the body and release of the other elements such as earth, water, fire and sky, which were an integral constituent parts of the gross body, into their primary cosmic forms. This ensures that there would be no more vestiges of the earlier body left, and the dissolution is complete and final. Refer Yog Kundali Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

69. [This verse describes how to activate the Kundalini.]

The person desirous of activating the Kundalini and releasing its subtle energy for his spiritual benefit as well as to empower him with great mystical and occult powers should sit steadily in the Padmasan posture¹. The palms of the two hands are placed one on the top of the other, face upwards and put on the heels of the two legs (which have already been folded in from the knee joint in such a way that the heels are just opposite the navel, the sole is pointed upwards and inwards towards the body, and the toes of the leg of left side rest on the thigh of the right side and of the right leg on the thigh of the left side). The chin is drawn in and held tightly near the pit of the throat below the Adam's apple.

While sitting in this posture, the practitioner should focus his mind on the patron deity of ascetics, usually on Lord Shiva who is regarded as the supreme Brahm manifested in the form of the 'pure self'. The Apaana Vayu (i.e. the wind in the lower part of the body, especially in the lower intestines and pelvic region) is drawn or pulled upwards, while at the same time the Prana Vayu (i.e. the breath moving in the upper part of the body, especially in the nostrils and lungs) is made to divert inwards or held from escaping. [This physical exercise is very difficult and requires a lot of practice and patience. It results in mixing these two primary winds in the body. This is effectuated when the Apaana wind is pulled up by the upwards tug of the Prana wind, and the latter is pushed down by the downwards pull of the former, resulting in a balancing effect.]

The net result of this exercise is that the practitioner is able to experience the astounding potentials of the released powers of the trapped subtle cosmic energy that was hitherto lying dormant in a hibernating state in the Kundalini. [When the two winds cross each other's path, they create enough force that shakes and rattles the Kundalini into activity, thereby unplugging its mouth to release the energy trapped inside its coils. This is like doing physical exercises in a gymnasium to loosen rigid muscles and tone them up.] (69).

[Note—¹The *Padmasan* posture is to sit in a lotus posture. This entails to sit crossed-legged in such a way that the foot of the left leg rests at the base of the thigh of the right side and the heel is just in front of the navel. Similarly, the right leg is drawn in and the foot is placed at the base of the thigh of the left leg and the heel is in front of the navel. The toes of each leg rest upon the thigh of the other side and the sole points upwards. The spine, neck and head are held in a ram-rod straight position, and the hands, with palms facing upwards and resting one on the top of the other, are placed on the folded legs in front of the navel region. The chin is drawn in and held tightly near the base of the Adam's apple near the chest. This Asana has been described in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 39 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.]

70. Those expert ascetics who are able to pull in the Prana Vayu (fresh breath) through the relevant Naadi during the practice of Pranayama (i.e. during the inhaling phase called 'Puraka' when the breath is pulled in successively through the left and right nostrils where the Ida and Pingla Naadis are respectively located), and then hold this Prana Vayu inside the body during the 'Kumbhaka' phase, are certainly able to obtain liberation and deliverance from the fetters represented by this body (i.e. are able to obtain 'Mukti' as described in note to verse no. 66-68 above). There is no doubt about it (70).

71. The drops of sweat that come out (due to the rigorous efforts made for Pranayam and Kundalini activation) should be rubbed into the body (instead of wiping them off with a towel). The practitioner should avoid diet that includes things that are bitter, sour, acidic or salty. Instead, he should remain happy subsisting on a diet of milk (71).

72. A diligent and wise ascetic who practices Yoga (various meditation exercises such as Pranayam etc.), observes the principles of Brahmacharya (self control, abstinence and continence etc.) and restrains his eating habits (as outlined in verse no. 71) is able to obtain success in his meditative endeavours by attaining Siddhi (mystical powers and spiritual elevation) within a period of one year. There is no doubt it (72).

[Note—The points mentioned in verse nos. 71-72 here are exactly the same as expressed in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 41-43 of the Sam Veda tradition.]

73-76. [Verse nos. 73-78 ½ describe the three ‘Bandhas*’ and their benefits for the practitioner of Yoga.]

An erudite and wise ascetic is able to obtain Siddhi (spiritual, mystical and occult powers) by harnessing the stupendous potentials of the Kundalini located at the upper end of the Kanda¹.

Constant practice of the meditative exercise called ‘Moolbandh’ or closing of the Muladhar Chakra² (located at the base of the spine, between the anus and the genitals) helps in mixing of the two vital winds, i.e. the Pran and Apaana (as described in 69-70 above). The output of urine and stool is reduced to a minimum level, and this can make an old man much younger than his age.

Moolbandh is done by pressing the genitals with the heels and constricting the muscles of the anus to close this opening. Meanwhile, the Apaana Vayu (the wind present in the rectum and anus region) is pulled upwards forcefully. [Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 46-47.] (73-74^{1/2}).

‘Uddiyan Bandh’ is said to be resemble the flight of some great bird (such as a falcon, a kite, a hawk, or an eagle) in the sky when it draws its stomach in to make its body more suitable for flight according to the principles of aerodynamics. Thus, the practitioner should pull the muscles of the stomach (abdomen) inside so much so that it is sucked in and almost touches the backbone or spine (thereby making the front part of the stomach look like a concave surface or a hollow bowl). The navel is pulled upwards as much as possible. [Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 48-49.] (74^{1/2}--76).

[Note—*The word *Bandha* literally means to stop, to close or to prevent the escape of an entity. In the context of Yoga it refers to the closing of the subtle apertures of the body through which the Pran or the vital winds could escape when pressure is exerted on them while doing Pranayam or other Yoga exercises. It is the virtual closure of all the exit points in the body so that the vital airs trapped inside and activated by doing various Yoga exercises such as Pranayam or Aasans or Mudras etc. are prevented from escaping from the body when put under great pressure. As a result, these winds can then be diverted in the desired channel by the practitioner of Yoga, such as utilizing them to unclog the blocked Kundalini (the coiled subtle energy center located at the base of the spine) and the Naadis (the tubular ducts of the body through which the vital life-factors called the Prans, the various impulses and signs of life such as the consciousness etc. move inside the body—e.g. the nerves, capillaries and veins). These Bandhas enable the practitioner to acquire stupendous mystical powers that enables him to perform supernatural deeds, such as to float in the air. They also help to arouse the latent energy

of the Kundalini and aid in its rising up in the Sushumna Naadi to reach the head which ultimately leads the practitioner of Yoga to experience the bliss of 'consciousness realisation'.

The three Bandhas described in these verses are also described in the Yoga Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 41 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. Refer also to Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 27, and Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 44-45 of Krishna Yajur Veda.

¹Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 3-6 describes the *Kanda*. It is located at a distance of nine fingers above the Muladhar Chakra. The Kanda means 'a root which is edible', e.g. radish. Kanda is located near the navel, is approximately 12 inches above the opening of the anus, approximately 4 inches or finger-width in diameter, and is about 12 fingers in length. It is enclosed or encased by a soft, silk like shroud made of a jelly like membrane or fold of skin. It is oblong and shaped like an egg. The nerve passing through the center of the Kanda (as its core) is the 'Sushumna Naadi'. It is surrounded by a dense network of nerves numbering 72 thousand.

Refer also to verse nos. 50-51 of the present Dhyana Bindu Upanishad which also describes the Kanda.

²The *Muladhar Chakra*—The word 'Muladhar' means a principal place or the root or fundamental place or foundation upon which everything else rests, or the place which gives support to all others, while 'Chakra' means a whirling energy center in the body. It is one of the principal seven nerve centers in the body where all the Naadis coordinate and form a knot of nerves. The word comes from 'Mool' or 'Mul' meaning 'a seed, the head, the source, the beginning, the root of a tree'. Hence, it is a metaphor for that portion of the body which harbours the divine subtle fire which, when aroused and kindled, can foster life in the creature. Muladhar is the foundation of life, as it were, because life rests on it. It is also called the Agni Kund or the symbolic 'fire pit' which harbours forces of life.]

77-80. This Uddiyan Bandh has the same relation to death for the ascetic as the lion has for the elephant. [In other words, just as a lion, though smaller in size than the giant elephant, is able to kill it because of its sheer muscular powers, agility, maneuverability, strength and stamina along with a fierce determination and use of crude force, this Uddiyan Bandh can certainly deliver the aspirant from the fetters of this body by setting his Pran or vital wind along with the Atma or soul free from the captivity of the body.]¹

The 'Jalandhar Bandh' literally means to hold the flow of water and it is like the magical and supernatural capacity of stopping the rain from falling down from the sky and instead remain hanging or transfixed up there in the sky itself. Practicing this Bandh helps the aspirant to overcome pains and torments caused by sins and misdeeds, as well as to destroy the fetters created by the deeds done by him which tie ordinary mortals in their entangling web².

To do Jalandhar Bandh, the throat is constricted at its pit so as to close the glottis and the larynx. This stops the flow of air (breath) and prevents the drop of Amrit (the nectar-like ambrosia of life) from virtually falling down and being consumed in the fire present inside the body. [In other words, the holding of the breath helps to preserve vital energy and hinders the decay of the body by the latter preserving its latent vital energy from being consumed in the fire which would be otherwise stoked if the air was allowed to be let in and out. This is like putting the vital functions of the body on hold, to put a break on the metabolic processes of the body or at least slow them down perceptibly, or it is like closing the workshop of the factory for a while to let the body recuperate its lost

energy and regenerate its consumed vital fuel.] [Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 50-51.] (77-78^{1/2}).

The 'Khechari Mudra'³ is that in which the tongue is inverted and tucked inside the mouth near the upper palate, and the sight is fixed at a point between the two eyebrows. When the Yoga practitioner is able to gain expertise in doing this Mudra, he is able to acquire astounding mystical powers that are supernatural and empowers him with great potentials. By successfully accomplishing it, the ascetic has no fear from being tormented by excessive desire to sleep, hunger, thirst and fear (78^{1/2}—80). [77-80].

[Note—¹The Udiyan Bandha gives the practitioner to fly like the bird and acquire the same strength as that possessed by the lion vis-à-vis death—i.e. it helps the ascetic to conquer death much like the lion overcomes and kills the elephant (verse nos. 74 ½-76 ½).

²The Jalandhar Bandha can empower him with such great mystical powers that he can stop the rain from falling if he so wants. From the metaphysical point of view, this Bandha helps him to overcome the pains and torments or evil consequences of sins and misdeeds (verse nos. 77-77 ½).

³The *Khechari Mudra* is amongst the best and toughest body postures that can be adopted by any ascetic, but at the same time it can empower the practitioner with stupendous mystical and occult powers and potentials. The word 'Khechari' is derived from the root 'Khe' which stands for the sky, and 'Chari' means to move, to wonder or to roam. Therefore the combined word 'Khechari' means one who can move in the sky.

It involves elongation of the tongue by constantly pulling it out and making it flexible by constant rotation. The nerves and veins at the lower end are cut so as to make is senseless. To obtain success in this, the tongue is smeared with butter and stretched by holding it with an iron tong. This results in the tongue getting sufficiently elongated as to reach the inner opening of the mouth by inverting it backwards, and then it is tucked inside the rear of the mouth at the back of the hind part of the upper palate, at the spot where the wind pipe, the food pipe and the mouth cavity converge in the throat. It is generally believed that it greatly helps in focusing attention. It also helps to conquer hunger, sleep, greed, unconsciousness or numbness of the sense organs, and keeps the practitioner alert and focused, etc. The apparent difference between Khechari and Shambhavi Mudras is that in the latter the tongue is not tucked inside the mouth cavity, and is therefore easier to practice. Meanwhile, the sight is fixed unwaveringly at a point midway between the two eyebrows.

This Khechari Mudra has been graphically described in Gherand Sanhita, verse no. 25-28, besides the Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 52-64 of the Sam Veda tradition; the Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 2/1/8 Shukla Yajur Veda tradition; the Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 40-42, the entire Canto 2 of the Yog Kundalini Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

81-84. A wise and erudite person who is an expert practitioner of Khechari Mudra is not tormented by epilepsy or fainting disease, nor by any other type of disease. He is also freed from getting entangled in the web of deeds and their consequences.

A person whose attention is diverted upwards towards higher planes and values of existence (i.e. when he attains spiritual elevation and supernatural powers) symbolically enabling him to float in the sky and soar higher into it, and whose tongue has been bridled and reined in (or tamed by tucking it inside the roof of the mouth, symbolising his control over his speech and the ability to remain silent for prolonged periods of time), is said to be possessed of great mystical and occult powers that are made available to him

by the brilliant good effects of Khechhari Mudra so much so that he cannot be tied any longer by any of the fetters of Kaal (time, age and circumstance) that are so strong that rarely anyone is freed from their clutches. [That is, he is able to cut through the web of ordinary existence by rising much higher than the mundane and possessing such mystical supernatural powers and potential that he can achieve goals that are not ordinarily possible for ordinary living beings.]

This is why this Khechhari Mudra is so much lauded and applauded by experienced and acclaimed ascetics.

It is so potent that a person who has mastered this art can withhold his sperms from being ejaculated even while having sexual intercourse with a woman¹. And as long as the life-giving sperm is held inside the body, say how can he fear from death and its chance appearance?² (81-84).

[Note—¹Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda, verse nos. 57-59 which explicitly describe and reiterates this fact. Refer also to Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 6, Brahmin 4, verse no. 9-11.

²That is, so long as a ascetic is able to exert sufficient control over his vital life forces and energy form being frittered away in sensual gratification, he would preserve sufficient stamina and vitality to maintain his health in a prime state, thereby eluding death for as long as is practically possible. This verse should not be wrongly construed to mean that he would never die, for this is incongruous even to imagine as everything that has come into being in this gross world would certainly come to an end some or the other day. The idea is to lead a healthy and productive life free from diseases which generally attack a body made feeble by dissipation of vital forces of life in the body such as happens by over-indulgence in sensual pleasures, whether it be related to overeating, sexual indulgences or any other sphere of physical activity that puts a strain on the vital energy of the body.]

85-88. If the sperm inadvertently ejects into the womb of the woman even while the man is in the Khechhari Mudra, then it is possible to suck it back from the womb if the man is well versed and an expert practitioner of this Mudra.

The cells bearing life are of two types—one is white coloured and the other is blood coloured. The white coloured ones are called ‘sperms of the male’, while the red coloured ones are called the ‘egg of the female’, called so because it is embedded in the vaginal fluid which resembles blood. This female fluid is called ‘Maharaj’ (the vaginal fluid), while the male fluid is called ‘Shukra’ (semen which contains the male sperm).

The red hot life bearing cells called the Maharaj is present in the womb, while the male cell is located in the testicles called ‘Chandra’ because of its white colour and its dangling nature outside the body in the scrotum. Obviously, their union is rare and very difficult to bring about.

The male sperm is said to be a personification of the Moon God and Lord Shiva, while the female reproductive cells are regarded as the personification of the Sun God and Shakti, the manifestation of the stupendous generative powers of creation in a personified form. (85-88).

[Note—Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 59-62 and Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/1/5 which expound an identical view on the subject. The semen is a white fluid just like the ambrosia of eternity and bliss that is meant for the use of Gods. It is called Amrit and is stored in the transparent celestial pitcher called the Moon—and this is why the Moon appears to be shining white in colour. The sperm helps to perpetuate

creation with its magical and magnificent generative powers; hence it is used as a metaphor for eternity, fertility, perpetuity, virility, vitality, strength and stamina. Since sexual process gives immense bliss, it is also regarded as a giver of extreme bliss and ecstasy. Lord Shiva is the personified Viraat Purush, the cosmic 'male' of creation, so he is depicted in iconography as bearing the pitcher of sperm, i.e. the Moon, on his head.

On the other hand, the female sexual fluid is red in colour like the blood, which is again a metaphor for life and vitality besides being synonymous with energy, heat, fire and passions. It is associated with new forms of life because of the presence of blood in it. It is used as a metaphor for the ferocity of fire, its dynamism and energy. It is red-hot, so it is compared to the Sun instead of the Moon. Lord Shiva's counter-part is called Shakti which is the Sanskrit word for energy, stamina, strength, vitality and powers. This female aspect of Shiva symbolises the creative powers represented by the ovary and its eggs along with the other female sexual organs. It's their union called 'Yoga' which results in the coming into being this visible creation. Refer also verse nos. 89-90 ½ below and its accompanying note.]

89-93. When these two, the male sperm and the female egg cell, unite, the physical body of the creature is conceived. When the mature eggs in the female ovary are activated or moved by the forces of subtle winds present inside the body, they are dislodged from the ovary and taken to the hollow cavity of the womb much like any light thing is taken aloft in the space of the sky by the sweeping action of a strong gust of wind, such as a tornado or a violent storm¹.

This female cell is endowed with the dynamic creative energy and the heat of the Sun (because it is surrounded by blood which is red in colour and is a symbol of vitality and life, and also because the red colour is a metaphor for heat and energy as indicated by the fiercely burning fire which appears to be aglow with a fiery red or orange colour). The white 'Shukra' (sperm floating in the sperm) resembles the Moon, and the red 'Maharaj' resembles the Sun². A person who is aware of the equal importance of these two forms of life is said to be an expert and erudite ascetic who is well versed in the essential philosophy of Yoga. [These concepts have been described in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 63-64 also.] (89-90^{1/2}).

The 'Maha Mudra' is employed to cleanse the different Naadis (tubular ducts in the body) of their impurities that clog them, disciplining their functioning and reforming and revitalizing them. The impurities that clog the Naadis are 'Vaata' (afflictions caused by rheumatism, gout and arthritis; problems of disturbed wind in the body), 'Pitta' (excessive bile formation; acidity) and 'Vayu' (wind or flatulence) by employing the coordinated efforts of the Sun and the Moon³. [Refer also to Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 65-70.]

The process of doing the Maha Mudra is the following—the hollow at the pit of the throat is pressed by the chin, the left leg is folded in at the knee and its heel is pressed against the genital, the body is bent forward so that the big toe of the outstretched right leg is grasped by the thumb and first fingers of both the hands, the abdomen is filled with inhaled air in the process called Khumbhak (holding it inside for roughly 1-3 minutes), and then letting it out gradually (also in another 1-3 minutes).

This process is repeated with the right leg folded in and the left stretched out. Wise and acclaimed ascetics assert that this 'great posture of Yoga' called the Maha Mudra is potent enough to destroy all sins and their evil consequences (90^{1/2}—93).

[Note—¹This is a metaphoric way of describing aroused sexual passions and lust in a mature woman which ‘drives her madly towards sexual intercourse’, fuelling her ‘flight of imaginations and fancy’ much like a balloon swept away by the wind. She does not bother about the consequences of this enterprise that can cast an eternal ignominy on her and taint her character for ever if such passions and natural desires are not handled by her judiciously, prudently and with propriety. She even forgets about the horrors and pains of bearing the child and the torments at child birth along with the attendant consequences on her general health so much so that she willingly goes about the entire cycle repeatedly, more often than not in quick succession, often coaxing her partner into submission. It is usually believed that it might be possible for a man to control his sexual passions, but for a lustful woman it is almost impossible.

²The *Moon* is said to be a heavenly transparent pitcher containing Amrit, the elixir of life and eternity which is white in colour indicating its purity and divine nature. The semen resembles this Moon because it contains the sperm which is possessed with all the qualities possessed by the mythical Amrit.

Similarly, the female egg is embedded in the blood present in the cavity of the female sexual organs. This cavity is hot and sexually arousing besides being the harbinger of life and its crucible. It is therefore compared to the *Sun* which is said to provide energy and heat to all forms of life in this world. Refer note to verse nos. 85-88 above also.

³The *Sun* is a symbol and receptacle of Nature’s energy, light, heat, vitality and life bestowing abilities as is evident from the fact that life would be extinguished without the presence of the Sun. Likewise, the *Moon* is said to be a receptacle of Amrit, the ambrosia of Gods that gives fertility and eternity.

In the present context, the coordination of the Sun and the Moon to de-clog the blocked and congested Naadis and revitalize them implies that the ‘Maha Mudra’—so called because it is the ‘great posture of Yoga’—can enable the ascetic to harness the dynamic energy of creation symbolised by the Moon and the Sun, standing for the male generative powers and the female generative powers respectively, which is present inside the body itself in the form of different Chakras (whirling subtle energy centers of the body) and the Kundalini (the coiled serpent-like energy center at the base of the spine), and which flows in the various Naadis (ducts) of the body once it is unleashed. This energy helps to revitalize and energise the Naadis, scrubbing them and reactivating them along with the other tissues of the body, and ridding them of their impurities and toxins. The entire process rejuvenates the entire body of the practitioner. That is why an ascetic who practices Maha Mudra is able to render himself free from all sorts of bodily ailments and chronic diseases—refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 69 which is very specific and explicit on this point.]

93/1. [Verse nos. 93/1-93/11 describe why the otherwise taintless, faultless and eternally immaculate pure conscious Atma of the creature is viewed as being tainted and corrupted by the influences of the different traits and qualities that it allows itself to be surrounded with during its interaction with the material world and its habitat in the gross body of the creature. This results in the Atma exhibiting certain traits that are not characteristic of it.

The Atma is visualised as residing in a Lotus which is like a glass-house having coloured walls. When this wishes to see the world, it sees it through these walls and gets a coloured view of the truth, i.e. it sees a tainted view of the world. Conversely, when one attempts to analyse the nature of the Atma he would be constrained to view it through these walls also and naturally the observer’s view of the Atma would be effected by the colour of these walls.]

Now the Atma, the pure conscious soul, is being discussed. The Atma is the pure consciousness of the living being, which is the latter's truthful 'self', and it resides in a microscopic form in a hypothetical Lotus having eight petals said to represent the subtle heart. This Atma is an invisible and imperceptible divine source of illumination (symbolising knowledge, erudition, sagacity, wisdom and enlightenment) manifesting itself as 'conscious self' of the living creature known as the 'Jivatma'. The Atma is all-knowing and omniscient, is omnipotent and able to accomplish everything, and is the habitat of everything in this existential world.

The Atma erroneously believes that it is the one who is the doer of all deeds, and is consequently the enjoyer of the rewards of these deeds or a sufferer of their evil effects. Likewise it believes that it is the one who suffers from distress and sorrows as well as enjoys and feels happy; it has deformities of the physical body such as being a one-eyed one, lame, dumb, deaf, emaciated and thin, or fat and well built. In this way, it behaves in different ways under different circumstances and occasions in an independent manner (93/1).

93/2. The petal of this divine symbolic Lotus pointing towards the east is white in colour. It is symbolic of the dominance of such traits as 'Dharma' (virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, nobility and good conduct) and 'Bhakti' (the virtues of devotion, faith, reverence and submission of one's self to the divine forces in creation and worshipping them). Thus, the Atma exhibits these grand traits when it dwells on this petal (of the divine Lotus symbolically present in the heart); or it exhibits these grand virtues when it turns towards this petal or leans more towards it as compared to other petals when it sees and interacts with the world.

In other words, when the Atma sees the world through the east side of this symbolic prism represented by the petal located on the east side of this Lotus, it discerns the eclectic virtues of Dharma and Bhakti as being more dominant than other qualities in the world. Thus it is influenced by these eclectic virtues and begins to exhibit them its self (93/2).

[Note—This is a metaphoric way of saying that these two traits—Dharma and Bhakti—are some of the divine virtues and eclectic qualities present in the Atma in its most primary and divine form as pure consciousness.

In more contemporary terms it is like the Atma looking at the world through a white prism. The colour of the prism would naturally affect the way the Atma sees the world much like a man wearing an eye-glass tinged white. Taken differently, this is like the Atma being surrounded by a transparent sheet of plastic which has a slight whitish hue to it, thereby casting a similar colour on the surface of the Atma. Thus, in this scenario, the Atma would appear to have a white colour and exhibit all those characteristics that go with this colour, such as the auspicious and virtuous traits of Dharma and Bhakti.

This same analogy would apply to all other verses showing different colours of the petals which are like different prisms through which the Atma looks at the world, or the different coloured sheaths or veils that surround the Atma, and which in turn cast their specific colours symbolising one or the other traits unique to that colour upon the Atma, thereby distorting its neutral existence. These characteristic traits either make the Atma appear tainted by corruptions so typical of this material world, or auspicious if it is able to acquire some noble and good characteristics which are also present in the same world. This is because the world has the three types of qualities called the Gunas—viz. the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna and the Tama Guna—simultaneously in varying proportions. While

the Sata Guna induces noble and auspicious virtues which makes a man contemplative and thoughtful, inducing in him a desire to search the truth of life and attain liberation from the shackles of the world, the Raja Guna makes the man more inclined to enjoy the world and its material comforts and pleasures, and the Tama Guna makes him evil and pervert, making him thoughtless and reckless.

Looking at the world through these symbolic petals as narrated in verse nos. 93/1-93/9 is a metaphoric way of saying that the Atma would not be able to see the reality as long as it depends upon the instruments of the body such as its gross components as the organs of perception and action, or its subtle components as the mind-intellect complex. The only way to know the 'truth and reality' would be to be self-contemplative and analytical by its own self. This is the main endeavour of all spiritual pursuit—to make the man realise the true nature of the Atma which is not only his 'true self' but also the immaculately pure consciousness and the Absolute Truth of existence that is never affected by any of the traits of this existential world. It is like pure gold which might appear to take myriad shapes and get tainted when the goldsmith moulds various ornaments with it, but 'gold' as the pure metal is always taintless and free from all impurities.]

93/3. The petal of this divine Lotus pointing towards the south-east is red in colour. It is symbolic of the dominance of such traits as 'Nidra' (tendency to sleep; drowsiness) and 'Alasya' (lethargy, torpor, inactivity, laziness, sloth, idleness and indolence). Thus, the Atma exhibits these negative traits when it dwells on this petal (of the divine Lotus symbolically present in the heart); or it exhibits these negative qualities when it turns towards this petal or leans more towards it as compared to other petals when it sees and interacts with the world.

In other words, when the Atma sees the world through the south-east side of this symbolic prism represented by the petal located on the south-east side of this Lotus, it discerns the negative qualities of excessive Nidra and Alasya as being more dominant than other qualities in the world. The Atma gets influenced by these traits, and as a result it appears to be dominated by sleep and laziness. Since the Atma is also the 'true identity' of the creature, such a creature who picks up these traits from the world would be more inclined to be drowsy and lethargic (93/3).

[Note—This is a metaphoric way of saying that these two traits—excessive desire to sleep and remain drowsy, as well as to become indolent and lethargic—are some of the negative virtues and demeaning qualities exhibited by the Atma when it begins to disassociate itself from its grand original nature as the immaculately pure consciousness by thinking that it is someone who has a physical gross body known as the creature that has a tendency to enjoy sleep when it feels tired and worn out, or become lazy when it abhors work and prefers bodily comforts.

As explained in note to verse no. 93/2, the colour of the prism or veil through which the Atma sees the world and which in turn casts its own shadow upon the colourless Atma is red in the case of this verse. This colour stands for the qualities mentioned above, thereby making the Atma appear to possess these attributes.]

93/4. The petal of this divine Lotus pointing towards the south is black in colour. It is symbolic of the dominance of such traits as 'Dwesh' (having ill-will, hatred, resentment, malice and animosity towards others) and 'Krodh' (having anger, indignation, spite, and being vengeful and wrathful). Thus, the Atma exhibits these negative traits as well when it dwells on this petal (of the divine Lotus symbolically present in the heart); or it exhibits

these negative qualities when it turns towards this petal or leans more towards it as compared to other petals when it sees and interacts with the world.

In other words, when the Atma sees the world through the south side of this symbolic prism represented by the petal located on the south side of this Lotus, it discerns the demeaning negative qualities of Dwesh and Krodh as being more dominant than other qualities in the world. As a result it is influenced by these traits and consequentially the creature also begins to exhibit these characteristics in his dealings (93/4).

[Note—This is a metaphoric way of saying that these two traits—having Dwesh and Krodh—are some of the negative virtues and demeaning qualities exhibited by the Atma when it begins to disassociate itself from its grand original nature as the immaculately pure consciousness by thinking that it is someone who has a physical gross body known as the creature who is different from other creatures in this creation, forgetting in the process that all the creatures have the same Atma inside them. The Atma begins to treat others with suspicion and treats them as competitors and opponents who are ready to harm its self-interest. This motivates the Atma to develop these negative traits of Dwesh and Krodh as described in this verse. The Atma becomes selfish and cruel; it develops animosity, jealousy, ill-will and skepticism which in turn fuel anger and hatred. The Atma forgets that the other creature is also its own image because the same consciousness resides uniformly and universally in all the living beings.

As explained in note to verse no. 93/2, the colour of the prism or veil through which the Atma sees the world and which in turn casts its own shadow upon the colourless Atma is black in the case of this verse. This colour stands for the qualities mentioned above, thereby making the Atma appear to possess these attributes.]

93/5. The petal of this divine Lotus pointing towards the south-west is blue or violet in colour. It is symbolic of the dominance of such traits as ‘Paap Karma’ (the natural tendency to commit unrighteous and sinful acts, and do deeds that are not auspicious, noble and virtuous) and ‘Hinsaa’ (causing harm of any kind to other creatures, whether physical or mental). Thus, the Atma exhibits these negative traits when it dwells on this petal (of the divine Lotus symbolically present in the heart); or it exhibits these negative qualities when it turns towards this petal or leans more towards it as compared to other petals when it sees and interacts with the world.

In other words, when the Atma sees the world through the south-west side of this symbolic prism represented by the petal located on the south-west side of this Lotus, it indulges in the demeaning negative qualities of Paap Karma (evil deeds) and Hinsaa (cruelty) because it sees the world as its opponent, competitor or harming its self-interest, or it forgets about its noble heritage and exalted pedigree as the supreme cosmic Consciousness personified and consequentially gets sucked in the muck of worldly deeds not bothering whether what it is doing is virtuous or not (93/5).

[Note—This is a metaphoric way of saying that these two traits—doing Paap Karma and showing the tendency of Hinsaa—are some of the negative attributes and demeaning qualities exhibited by the Atma when it begins to disassociate itself from its grand original nature as the immaculately pure consciousness by thinking that it is someone who has a physical gross body known as the creature who is selfish and self centered, and he needs to lord over other creatures in this creation who are meant to serve him. This erroneous belief and perception about its true ‘self’ leads the Atma to commit horrible sins in order to serve its selfish interests and gratify its own self, even to the extent of causing pain to others if they come in its way. This is because the Atma treats itself as being different from other creatures in this creation, forgetting in the process that all the

creatures have the same Atma inside them. The Atma begins to see and treat others as its opponents and competitors who are hell-bent in harming its self-interest, and therefore it is motivated to become extremely selfish and cruel, resulting in its doing evil deeds and becoming ruthless and cruel in order to protect its interests at all costs.

As explained in note to verse no. 93/2, the colour of the prism through which the Atma sees the world and which in turn casts its own shadow upon the colourless Atma is blue or violet in the case of this verse. This colour stands for the qualities mentioned above, thereby making the Atma appear to possess these attributes.]

93/6. The petal of this divine Lotus pointing towards the west is said to have the divine colour of the pure crystal (i.e. transparent and colourless, having the colour of the surrounding environment). It is symbolic of the dominance of such traits as 'Krida' (the natural tendency to playfully do anything in a spirited form; to play sport and do deeds cheerfully, to remain ever active and spirited) and 'Vinod' (to remain in a cheerful and joyous mood; to enjoy life and its delights; to treat the world and its activities as a magnificent deal; to derive pleasure and comfort from this world and its activities; to derive maximum pleasure and comfort from the materials that this world has to offer). Thus, the Atma exhibits these enjoyable and exhilarating traits when it dwells on this petal (of the divine Lotus symbolically present in the heart); or it exhibits these unique qualities of doing deeds as a means of enjoyment when it turns towards this petal or leans more towards it as compared to other petals when it sees and interacts with the world.

In other words, when the Atma sees the world through the west side of this symbolic prism represented by the petal located on the west side of this Lotus, it discerns the enjoyable characteristics in the world such as the qualities of Krida and Vinod that all the creatures in the world indulge in. This acts as an incentive for the Atma to indulge in Krida and Vinod itself though by nature it is supposed to be neutral, dispassionate and detached from such things pertaining to the gross world and the gross body. Again, since the Atma is the true 'self' of the creature, the latter also begins to get involved in enjoying this world and deriving pleasure from the activities of the material world (93/6).

[Note—This is a metaphoric way of saying that these two traits—playfully doing all types of activities or indulging in doing Krida, and enjoying it and deriving pleasure from it at the same time, i.e. having Vinod from it—are some of the attractive attributes and engaging qualities exhibited by the Atma when it begins to disassociate itself from its grand original nature as the immaculately pure consciousness that is neutral to, uninvolved in and dispassionate towards any forms of emotions and sentiments that have anything to do with the material world and its alluring charms and physical attractions that cause any kind of arousal and restlessness in the calm waters of the deep state of eternal blissfulness in which the Atma, the pure self, exists. This distorted view of what consists of true happiness and joy leads the Atma to exhibit these traits of getting involved in playful activities of the world and then enjoying the pleasures derived from success in them.

As explained in note to verse no. 93/2, the colour of the prism or veil through which the Atma sees the world and which in turn casts its own shadow upon the colourless Atma is like the crystal in the case of this verse. This colour stands for the qualities mentioned above, thereby making the Atma appear to possess these attributes.]

93/7. The petal of this divine Lotus pointing towards the north-west has the colour of Manik (a dark red-coloured gem known as Ruby). It is symbolic of the dominance of such traits as 'Gaman-Chalan' (the natural tendency to be constantly on the move and

wander from place to place) and ‘Vairagya’ (to remain in a state of profound renunciation; having total disinterest in anything pertaining to this material world or anything that is not eternal and imperishable; to be dispassionate and detached). Thus, the Atma exhibits these grand traits when it dwells on this petal (of the divine Lotus symbolically present in the heart); or it exhibits these virtues and auspicious grand qualities when it turns towards this petal or leans more towards it as compared to other petals

In other words, when the Atma sees the world through the north-west side of this symbolic prism represented by the petal located on the north-west side of this Lotus, it finds that the world is always on the move and never rests. It also finds that the world is arriving and departing constantly—i.e. the creatures die and take a new birth in an endless cycle. It sees constant destruction and construction; it observes that nothing is static and stable in this world. This makes the Atma also think that these characteristics of the world are also applicable to it, and it forgets in the process that it distinct from the ever-changing world as it is a stable, unmoving, eternal and imperishable divine entity (93/7).

[Note—This is a metaphoric way of saying that these two traits—remaining constantly on the move like a wandering friar or mendicant, and having complete renunciation—are some of the magnificent attributes and virtues qualities exhibited by the Atma when it begins to recognise its true nature and form as the immaculate and pure enlightened consciousness, and consequentially begins to disassociate itself from the falsehoods of this illusionary and perishable world along with its equally illusionary and perishable material pleasures and comforts.

As explained in note to verse no. 93/2, the colour of the prism or veil through which the Atma sees the world and which in turn casts its own shadow upon the colourless Atma is dark red in the case of this verse. This colour stands for the qualities mentioned above, thereby making the Atma appear to possess these attributes.]

93/8. The petal of this divine Lotus pointing towards the north has a yellow (or orange) colour. It is symbolic of the dominance of such traits as having pleasure in ‘Sringar’ (the natural tendency to be constantly decorating oneself and trying to look physically beautiful and attractive to others; grooming one’s self and taking unusual care of the external beauty of the physical body; being obsessed with physical charms and beauty of the body and deriving immense pleasure and mental satisfaction from it). Thus, the Atma exhibits these peculiar quirky traits of self indulgence in the gross and perishable body when it dwells on this petal (of the divine Lotus symbolically present in the heart); or it exhibits these negative qualities of self-indulgence and being extra obsessed with the care of the body and its physical charms and attractiveness when it turns towards this petal or leans more towards it as compared to other petals.

In other words, when the Atma sees the world through the north side of this symbolic prism represented by the petal located on the north side of this Lotus, it finds that the world is a beautiful physical place to live in and those with beautiful and handsome bodies are at a premium; everyone praises those who are charming and attractive to look at. So the Atma begins to adore the physical gross body in which it lives and starts adorning it and grooming it. It forgets in the process that the ‘real self’ is not the physical gross body that needs to be groomed or decorated but the eternal ‘consciousness’ that does not need any external grooming or adoration to enhance its natural beauty. It also

forgets in this delusory environment that this body, so meticulously taken care of, is nevertheless perishable and subject to decay and death (93/8).

[Note—This is a metaphoric way of saying that this trait—of being unduly obsessed with the grooming of the gross body, spending hours to decorate it and make it look attractive and charming, i.e. doing Sringar—is one of the many ill begotten traits that taint the Atma and divert it from its inherently taintless nature and form. This happens when the Atma begins to identify its self with the body and not as the pure consciousness residing inside this body as the true ‘self’.

As explained in note to verse no. 93/2, the colour of the prism or veil through which the Atma sees the world and which in turn casts its own shadow upon the colourless Atma is yellow or orange in the case of this verse. This colour stands for the qualities mentioned above, thereby making the Atma appear to possess these attributes.]

93/9. The petal of this divine Lotus pointing towards the north-east has the colour of Vaidurya Mani (the precious gem known as beryl; lapis-lazuli; the gem with a silvery grey colour; or yellow, white, green and blue colour; the most common forms being Aquamarine and Emerald). It is symbolic of the dominance of such noble traits as ‘Daan’ (doing charities, making donations and giving of alms) and ‘Kripa’ (showing kindness, compassion, mercy and grace). Thus, the Atma exhibits these virtuous noble traits when it dwells on this petal (of the divine Lotus symbolically present in the heart); or it exhibits these grand and magnificent qualities of (of being magnanimous and kind towards others and helping them in their needs) when it turns towards this petal or leans more towards it as compared to other petals

In other words, when the Atma sees the world through the north-east side of this symbolic prism represented by the petal located on the north-east side of this Lotus, it discerns grand and auspicious virtues of Daan and Kripa as the dominant traits in this world. The Atma finds that these virtues are very much lauded and sought after, so it endeavours to acquire them for its self; it gets influenced by this noble view of the world and becomes charitable and compassionate its self (93/9).

[Note—This is a metaphoric way of saying that these two traits—Daan and Kripa—are one of the many auspicious and divine virtues shown by the Atma when it is in its primary form. These two attributes of the Atma are what makes a man as holy and revered as the supreme Lord who is famously known as the ‘merciful one’ and the ‘benevolent Lord of all’.

As explained in note to verse no. 93/2, the colour of the prism or veil through which the Atma sees the world and which in turn casts its own shadow upon the colourless Atma is that of Aquamarine and Emerald in the case of this verse. This colour stands for the qualities mentioned above, thereby making the Atma appear to possess these attributes.]

93/10. When the attention of the Atma of the creature is focused on the various joints of the body, great sufferings afflict the body and it suffers from great pain and agony caused by ‘Vaata’ (disturbed wind in the body), ‘Pitta’ (disturbed bile and acidity in the body) and ‘Kafa’ (disturbed mucous in the body, causing cough and other discharges)¹ (93/10).

[Note—¹When the Atma thinks that there exists something called the ‘body’ which is its ‘own self’, it is only then that it begins to feel pain and suffer from that pain. But once it gets disassociated from the body and treats the latter as a distinctly separate entity from its self, then such cause of pain does not arise. The clear proof of this way of thinking lies in two examples—one, a particular man does not feel pain when someone else writhes in

agony due to an injury, and two, the same man does not feel the pain in his own body when he goes to sleep. This is because in the first instance, his own Atma is not linked to the second person's body and therefore this person does not feel the pain and suffering of the other person, and in the second case the sleeping man's consciousness is diverted away from the physical body as long as he is asleep, thereby eliminating all senses of pain and sufferings.

The idea here is that only as long as the Atma identifies itself with the body that it would feel pain afflicting the latter, such as the horrible torments of rheumatism, arthritis, gout, cough, acidity and other diseases of the body which causes its movement very painful. Once the Atma pulls itself away from the body, it would lose all connections with it and would become a neutral observer of its sufferings, watching it stoically with a calm demeanour.]

93/11. When the attention of the Atma of the creature is focused away from these joints and centered on some other point (i.e. when the creature is not tormented by stiff joints and pain in them, or cough and hyper-acidity that causes headaches etc. for example), it is able to divert its attention in learning things, in focusing its attention on studying and acquiring knowledge, in singing and dancing and generally enjoying life¹ (93/11).

[Note—¹When the Atma is freed from the numerous afflictions of the body, i.e. when it begins to tolerate the pains of the body and regard them as part of the game of life, becoming unconcerned about them and does not remain too obsessive with them, it then begins to enjoy the same life with new zeal and vigour though the body might still be suffering from these afflictions.

In other words, this verse advises the reader to be dispassionate and neutral towards this body and the sufferings of the world, and treat them as a part of the game of life which have to be tolerated without making any fuss, because making fuss and raising tantrums would not erase the pain and suffering, instead they would only exacerbate them. The best path for a spiritual aspirant is the median path of being stoic and tolerant, tending to the needs of the body just like a doctor attends to his patient dispassionately and in a clinical fashion, but always remaining cheerful and happy internally so that the mind is peaceful and life could be lived fruitfully.]

93/12. [Verse nos. 93/12-93/15 describe the three paths or rings that the creature traverses to reach his final resting place when he is tired of this world and wants peace and rest. Since the Atma is the true identity of the living being, when the word 'Atma' is used in these verses it is used as a synonym for the living creature.]

When the eyes are tired, the Atma is said to move along the first path or first ring that is overcast with the colour of the flower called 'Bandhuk' (a flower that blooms in the middle of the day and is usually of red colour), making the eyes look drowsy, droopy and sleepy. When the Atma follows this path, the man falls asleep. [It is like the case of a hot summer day when a man feels tired and wishes to go to sleep inspite of the fact that the natural sleeping time is not the day but the night. It is also why tired or over-strained eyes look blood-shot red.]

The dreaming state of existence is during or part of this sleeping state of consciousness. During this dreaming state, the Atma does not find its complete rest because of so many activities that are deemed to be done by it during this stage, and because there are so many things that are seen, heard and imagined during the dreaming phase of sleep (93/12).

[Note—When the man is tired of the work in this world and wants to take rest, his eyes clearly reflect this weariness by becoming sleepy and blood-shot red; the man becomes drowsy and listless; his eyelids begin to droop and he loses focus and attention. This indicates that he wants to retire to his inner-chamber or the bed-room and rest for the day. When he falls asleep, it appears that he is resting, but it is only his gross body that is inactive, for the mind and the sub-consciousness are as active as they were while he was awake. Rather, the mind becomes over-active in his dreams because now it can feel freed from the limitations imposed by the physical gross body, and therefore it can imagine a world which is much more fascinating and stupendous than what the man was actually witnesses while he was awake, and then the mind makes the man do things that he would never imagine of ever doing in the physical world where he lives. The mind takes ‘wings’ and lets off its imaginative and creative talents take hold of the man’s sub-conscious, and he begins to fly off to unimaginable heights of fantasy and magical charms. In other words, the man begins to dream. That is why a man dreams of things, places, persons and achievements that are simply beyond his imagination while awake.]

In short, when the creature is tired, his Atma wishes to take rest, so the creature sleeps. The first step of sleep is this ‘dreaming stage’—defined as the ‘first path’ or the ‘first ring’ here. The red, tired eyes are the preparatory stage or the initial stage for this first path. Like a man closes his office doors when he wishes to retire for the day, the closing of the eyelids are done by the Atma to shut off the outside world and go to sleep.]

93/13. To overcome the restlessness and the weariness caused by strenuous efforts made during the dreaming state of existence, the conscious Atma enters the second ring or path called a ‘Valaya’ that leads to the path that gives better rest to the Atma. This so-called second path is called ‘Sushupta’ or the deep sleep state of existence. This path has a shadow over it to give protection and comfort to the Atma which has become weary from the restlessness of the dreaming stage. This shadow is of the colour of the insect called ‘Vir-Bahuti’ (a red coloured insect that appears when the first rains fall). [The word ‘shadow’ here refers to the practice of covering one’s eyes when one goes to sleep. Though the eyelids are already closed, proper sleep is got by covering the eyes with some cloth or shutting off all sources of external light which would be also like putting the eyes in a shadow.]

During this stage of deep sleep state of existence called the Sushupta, the creature’s intellect and thoughts are concerned only with the supreme transcendental Consciousness present in his own bosom as his ‘true self’ which is wisdom and enlightenment personified. It is only when this stage is reached that it is possible for the creature to have access to the supreme transcendental Ishwar or Brahm (present in his own self as his Atma as described in the next verse) (93/13).

[Note—Even though the external body appears to be resting during sleep when the man is dreaming, he does not find actual rest as expected as his mind is as active and restless as it was during the waking state of his existence. This is because the mind is engaged in doing so many things, seeing so many things, hearing so many things in the imaginary world of dreams that it is equivalent to it remaining engaged while the body was awake, and getting tired in the process. So the creature enters the second path which is much quieter for him, and this is the path of deep sleep when there are no dreams and the mind then finds complete rest. It is freed from having to attend to so many sensory inputs from the external world in which it had dwelt earlier, whether it was the physical world of waking state, or the imaginary world of dreams. Now the mind has got the time to look somewhere else, and then it discovers to its amazement the world of pure bliss, the world

of peace and restfulness is in the non-involvement with the world, whether that involvement is physical or imaginary. This total 'non-involvement' comes in the deep sleep state of existence because the mind-intellect as well as the sub-conscious are inactive.

The Atma which is the 'real self' of the creature was involved in this world in the hope of deriving peace and bliss in it, but to its dismay it discovered that the world would not give it either of them. So it wished to sleep. Then to its utter frustration it discovered that the mind would not let it rest in sleep also because it started dreaming. Then the Atma crosses this ring and enters the next inner ring called the 'deep sleep or Sushupta' state of consciousness. Left undisturbed and unperturbed, the Atma of the creature now finds rest and peace. The creature discovers the presence of pure consciousness in his own bosom, and this is the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm personified.

So on the one hand the Atma has searched out its 'true self' as the pure consciousness which is Brahm personified, and on the other hand the creature has got what he wanted—peace and tranquility.]

93/14. When the creature's Atma enters the third ring or takes the third inner path which is of the colour of Ruby or a red lotus flower and plunges into it, then it is said that it has reached the fourth state of exalted existence called Turiya¹. This is a stage from where the Atma does not revert back to first three stages, i.e. the deep sleeping, dreaming and waking respectively in this reverse order, and thus it remains in perpetual contact with the fount of eternal enlightenment and blissfulness known as the Atma. In other words, it gradually withdraws itself from successive layers of existence and finally enters the sanctum sanctorum of Divinity when it realises the eternal source of enlightenment and bliss, of beatitude and felicity which is known as the Atma, and then remains perpetually submerged and drowned in it, without thinking of anything else (93/14).

[Note—¹There are in all three primary stages in which the creature's Atma exists in this world from the metaphysical point of view. The first is the waking stage, and then it enters the second stage called the sleeping stage. This sleeping stage has two divisions—i.e. the dreaming stage as described in verse no. 93/12 and deep sleep stage as described in verse no. 93/13. Beyond this is the third stage called the Turiya stage as described in current verse no. 93/14.

These primary stages can be regarded as four stages if we take the two stages of dreaming and deep sleep separately. Refer also verse no. 94. Verse no. 36 of this Upanishad presents another interpretation of these three states of existence.]

93/15. At this last stage, the aspirant should merge his Pran and Apaana winds (i.e. the wind that is primarily located in the upper part of the body, and the one located in the lower half respectively), and treat the entire world as synonymous with the single divine entity known as the pure conscious Atma. [It is to be noted that the process of mixing the two winds has been described briefly earlier in this Upanishad in the context of Pranayam, various Aasans and Mudras.]

When the aspirant is convinced that there is essentially only one truthful entity in this creation, which is the immutable and immanent 'Atma', he should then focus his entire attention on this single goal as the aim of his spiritual pursuits. This last stage is called 'Turiyatit' or the stage that goes even beyond the fourth stage of Turiya. During this last state of existence of the creature, all his doubts and confusions are removed, and everything appears to be soaked in absolute bliss and ecstasy. This is the ultimate state of the realisation of the Absolute Truth of existence.

Only till the time the creature believes that it has a physical body which belongs to it and is its true 'identity' and 'self' does it remain trapped in this delusion and erroneous perception about the true nature of the 'self'. As soon as the creature goes beyond this fallacious notions of the 'self', and rises higher in his spiritual progress to realise the actual eclectic truth about his own self as being the subtle and sublime Atma which is the universally pure consciousness and not the gross physical body with its inherent limitations, he is said to have obtained the essential nectar of supreme transcendental Divinity marked by eternal beatitude and felicity.

This eclectic path provides a holistic approach to divinity and holiness in as much as it shows the way to 'Moksha' (liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation) as well as to 'Atma Darshan' (the realisation of the truth about the real 'self' of the creature as the Atma which is the pure, enlightened and sublime Consciousness, and which is different from the gross body) (93/15).

94. When the Atma is accustomed to remaining steady inspite of the buffeting effects of the winds present inside the body which cause undue restlessness to it and hinder its spiritual progress (by causing so many distractions for it as narrated, inter alia, in verse nos. 50, 59-61, 80-81, 93/10-11 above), it acquires sufficient expertise to accompany the vital winds as they move upwards towards the abode of Brahm by the practice of various meditation exercises and concentration of the forceful powers of the mind as described earlier in this Upanishad.

In other words, these four symbolic paths (described in verse no. 93/12—93/15 above) are taken by the Atma (i.e. the pure conscious self of the creature) along with the Pran (i.e. the vital winds that infuse life inside the body) as it moves towards the 'Maha Dwar'¹, or the great doorway leading to Brahm-realisation and attaining the final Moksha or liberation and deliverance of the soul. During this journey, it reaches the so-called 'Ardha Trikona'², or the symbolic half-triangle. Here the Atma is able to witness or 'see' the presence of the exalted seat of the divine Being honoured by the epithet 'Achut'³. In other words, it is here that the spiritual aspirant is able to witness the symbolic presence of the supreme Brahm as 'Achut' because it is here that he gets the light of enlightenment. (94).

Note—¹The *Maha Dwar* is literally the 'great doorway or gate'. In metaphysical terms it refers to the Brahm-Randhra located on the top of the head (cranium) where there is a hair-like micro-fine slit in the skull bone from where it is believed the Pran, or the vital life-giving winds present inside the body, of the ascetic leave when he reaches the climax of meditation. This Pran is accompanied by the Atma on its outward journey from the body. This is because Pran and life are synonymous with each other, and so is the Atma which is synonymous with 'consciousness' that prevails in a living being. When the ascetic dies by the exit of his Pran from the body through the Brahm-Randhra, it is obvious that his consciousness also leaves; the body that is rendered lifeless without the Pran becomes unconscious—or 'without consciousness'. It is believed that the supreme transcendental Brahm entered the body of the man at the time of creation through this Brahm-Randhra, and then took up residence in the head as the man's eclectic virtues of having wisdom, erudition, sagacity and intellect with its accompanying faculties such as reasoning, rationality, analysis, logic, discrimination, deduction, scientific predictions etc.

Yoga Upanishads describe elaborately how the Pran is channalised through the Sushumna Naadi by activation of the Kundalini and practicing the various Mudras and Aasans along with Pranayam to reach the forehead. It is here that the ascetic experiences

the presence of light of wisdom and enlightenment besides accessing the various mystical powers of deep insight into the realm of the unknown and transcendental. Such achievements are truly super-human, and can only be achieved by a Brahm-realised person and not by an ordinary mortal. So when the Atma reaches this area of the head, the spiritual aspirant witnesses the presence of the supreme Divinity known as Brahm.

When the Pran makes its exit through the Brahm-Randhra and merges with the universal air or wind element present outside the gross body of the creature, there is no chance of it ever returning back into the body. This is tantamount to his final liberation and deliverance because the body without life would disintegrate into its basic elements such as the fire, water, sky and earth, leaving nothing behind. This is also called 'Kaivalya Mukti' in metaphysical parlance.

It is the final dissolution of the creature when he becomes one with the cosmic elements of creation from where his origin can be traced. This Brahm-Randhra is called the 'Maha Dwar' because it is the main gate through which the Pran and the Atma exit from the body to find their liberation and deliverance; it facilitates the exit of the Pran and the Atma from the great prison of the body in which they were trapped. Since freedom from a life of bondage is an exhilarating experience, it is said that the creature experiences extreme sense of bliss when the creature in the form of his Pran (life sustaining forces in his body) and the Atma (pure consciousness) reaches this Maha Dwar.

The Amrit Naad Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 26 asserts that it is the Mana or the mind of a creature that decides the path he should take to reach his goal in life out of the various options available depending upon the natural inclinations, temperaments, objective of life and desires of the creature. So if the creature sincerely wishes to obtain liberation and deliverance from the shackles of the body and the find freedom from the endless cycle of birth and death in the world and its accompanying horrors, then the mind would aid in the process by concentrating all its faculties to help the Atma and Pran reach the Maha Dwar and escape. In other words, the Mana would enable the enlightened creature to find the eternal source of bliss and happiness by becoming 'self-realised'.

Another related concept is the *Brahm Vivar*. It is literally a hole like aperture present at the back of the mouth where it opens into the wind pipe which connects the lungs to the nose. This is the location of the 'Talu Chakra' or the swirling subtle energy center located at the back of the palate. It has a direct link to the Brahm Randhra present in the cranium at the top of the head, and is the hair-like slit marking the joint between the two parts of the skull.

This Brahm Vivar is also called *Brahm Dwar* or the 'doorway to Brahm' because it opens directly into the duct that connect the lower part of the body to the Brahm Randhra and through which the vital winds called Pran travel during the practice of Yoga (such as Pranayam, Kundalini and Sushumna Naadi activation, various Aasans and Bandhas etc.).

Refer verse nos. 103-106 of this Upanishad below in this context. Refer also to Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse nos. 27, 39; Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 18-20; Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17 in this context.

²The *Ardha Trikona* or the half-triangle refers to the area of the forehead between the hair line and the two eyebrows. The full triangle would consist of the base formed by joining the eyebrows so that the line passes through the base of the root of the nose, and the apex would be the Brahm Randhra described above. This area is said to be the seat of wisdom and enlightenment. Refer verse no. 39 of this Upanishad.

It is here that the creature witnesses the supreme transcendental Brahm's presence in the form of Achut.

³*Achut* means an entity that is exalted, divine, holy, immaculate and incorruptible; that has a high stature, is untainted, imperishable, steady, constant and eternal; an entity that cannot be demoted, degraded, demeaned or belittled in anyway whatsoever. This epithet applies to the supreme transcendental Brahm present in the creature's inner self as his own Atma or the pure consciousness.]

95. Above this so-called 'half-triangle' is the site where the brain is located, and therefore is the site where the thinking powers of the creature, the stupendous powers mind and intellect to contemplate and fix attention on something, to discriminate and analyse, to rationalize and deduce anything systematically as well as their creative and constructive powers of imagination are located. [This area is the cerebrum.]

A wise practitioner should meditate and contemplate upon the primary elements along with their primary colours and their relevant Beej Mantras here.

Therefore, he should next meditate and contemplate upon the basic elements of creation such as the earth etc. (the others being water, fire, air and space) as well as the five vital Prans (winds such Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaana and Samaana) along with their root words (called the 'Beej' Mantra or the basic letter that symbolises them and represents their inherent subtle strength and powers), their specific distinguishing marks and classifications (called their 'Varns'), and their locations (called their 'Sthaan') in this creation.

The Beej or seed letter of the Pran wind (the primary air which infuses life inside the gross body; the breath) is the Sanskrit alphabet 'Ya'. It has the hue of purple or violet or reddish blue, and it represents the rain bearing clouds that are harbingers of life on earth.

The Beej or seed letter of the Apaana wind (the primary air which moves downwards in the body and helps in food intake and its movement through the intestines, its digestion and elimination from the body) is the Sanskrit alphabet 'Ra'. It has the hue of golden yellow resembling the brilliant sun, and represents the fire element (95).

96. The Beej or seed letter of the Vyan wind (the primary wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds) is the Sanskrit alphabet 'La'. It has the hue of red like the colour of the flower called 'Bandhuk' (a flower that blooms in the middle of the day), and it represents the earth element.

The Beej or seed letter of the Udaana wind (the primary wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough) is the Sanskrit alphabet 'Va'. It has the hue of shining white like that of the conch shell, and it represents the Jiva or the living being in this creation (96).

97. The Beej or seed letter of the Samaana wind (the primary wind that helps the body in equal distribution of nourishment throughout it, as well as in the circulation of blood) is the Sanskrit alphabet 'Ha'. It has the hue of the colour crystal, and it represents the taintless, colourless and pristine pure sky element in creation.

This Samaana wind lives in the heart, navel, nostrils, ears and the big toe of the foot (97).

98. It (Samaan wind) also lives uniformly in all the seventy two thousand Naadis (ducts of the body) as well as in the twenty eight crore (1 crore = 10 million) roots of hairs present in the body (98).

[Note—In the context of verses nos. 95-98, refer also to the Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse nos. 31-39.]

99. It is to be noted that Pran wind and Samaan wind are not two distinct winds but are essentially the same wind element hypothetically classified into two types just for the sake of convenience of study—primarily they are one, they refer to the same living entity which cannot survive even for a fleeting second without the presence of any one of them.

So a wise practitioner of meditation should steady his mind and attention, and not allow it to be stupidly and unduly get disturbed in futile debates about these artificial classifications of life giving entities known by different names. Thus, becoming steady in his convictions, he should diligently practice the three phases of Pranayam such as Purak (inhaling wind or air), Kumbhak (filling the body with this inhaled air and holding it inside for certain time) and Rechak (exhaling this trapped air from the body). [This would help in mixing all the winds in the body, because no artificial boundaries are present inside the body that could prevent the various winds from mixing freely.] (99).

100. He should draw all the forms of the wind element from different parts of the body and concentrate them into the core of the subtle heart (where his pure conscious 'self', the Atma, resides). To enable this to happen, he would have to prevent the vital winds from escaping from the body by stopping their exit in the form of the Pran wind (the exhaled breath) and Apaana wind (the flatulence passing out of the anus). [Verse nos. 73-93 describe how this is brought about.]

To aid in this enterprise, he should focus his attention of meditating upon OM in a holistic way. [This is described in verse nos. 14-34, 54-65, 70, and 93 amongst others in great detail.] (100).

101. The passage of the throat (i.e. the trachea and the gullet) and the opening of the genital organ (i.e. the urethra) are drawn in and closed, followed by the upwards pulling action of the Sushumna Naadi which resembles the stalk of the lotus flower which emerges in the Mooladhar Chakra at the base of the spine and passes up through it (101).

102. An expert practitioner of Yoga exercises hears a resonating sound resembling the music emanating from the Indian lute reverberating through the core of the Sushumna Naadi much like the hollow of the conch shell produces the sound when air is blown hard into it (102).

[Note—Refer also to verse nos. 2-3, 37 of this Upanishad also.]

103-106. When the practitioner of Yoga is able to concentrate his Pran and Atma in the top of the head (the skull) which is shaped like an inverted hollow bowl, he hears a sound resembling the loud call made by the peacock¹ at the spot called the 'Vyom Randhra' which is also known as the Brahm Randhra².

The inverted (upside down) bowl of the skull has four openings, called the 'doors'³.

The self-illuminated and self-enlightened Atma (here referring to the supreme transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm) is present in the subtle space of the hollow of the skull much like the celestial sun is present in the external sky.

The inherent subtle and sublime divine authority, powers and potentials that this Atma (i.e. Brahm) possesses are represented by the 'Shakti' (the female personification of these virtues and qualities) standing at the opening of the 'Brahm Randhra'. This Shakti empowers the practicing ascetic to be able to concentrate his thoughts and focus his attention on realisation of the true 'self' which is the pure conscious Atma personifying the supreme transcendental Brahm in order to facilitate his final liberation and deliverance from this body and the world. This is tantamount to emancipation and salvation of his soul, called 'Kaivalya Mukti' because it is his final dissolution and a unique one at that in as much as he would not have to take birth again. This is possible when true self-realisation and enlightenment dawns upon the intellect and mind of the aspirant ascetic, and this unique achievement is therefore regarded as the crowning glory of all his Yoga practices as well as his spiritual pursuits.

The point in the forehead where the virtual 'third eye of wisdom' is located is like the Chandra Bindu placed on the symbol of OM. [That is, it is like the focal point of the parabolic surface representing the cosmic dish where the practitioner of Yoga can hear the cosmic Naad, the primary sound of ether, resonating in his head.] It symbolically represents the 'sight' that comes with wisdom and enlightenment. Since Lord Shiva is the God who personifies the virtues of wisdom, enlightenment, erudition and self-realisation of the highest order, remaining perpetually in a state of meditation and contemplation, this place in the forehead is said to be his symbolic abode⁴.

Again, since knowledge, erudition, wisdom and enlightenment are like priceless and glittering gems, this place is said to be bejeweled and embellished with brilliantly shining gems.

A person who is well acquainted with the knowledge contained in this Upanishad is deemed to be eligible to attain final emancipation and salvation for his self, called Kaivalya Mukti. Verily, this is what this Upanishad expounds, elucidates, asserts and affirms.

Thus ends this Upanishad (103-106).

[Note—¹When the vital winds are concentrated on the top of the skull which is like an inverted bowl, the grave and resonating but soothing sound emanating from the Sushumna Naadi is heard louder like a shriek of the peacock because of the acoustic make of this area. The hissing and rustling sound that is made by the movement of the vital airs inside the body is magnified manifold when they enter the Sushumna Naadi and reach the head. The practitioner of Yoga can hear this otherwise very subtle sound that is inaudible under ordinary circumstances in a loud reverberating mode as narrated in verse no. 102.

²The *Brahm Randhra* is the hair like slit on the top of the skull from which the Pran and Atma of the Yogi escape to the outside world at the time of his death and his final dissolution into the elements. It is believed that the supreme Brahm had entered the man's body through this aperture at the time of creation.

The word Vyom means the sky, and therefore the opening that opens into the sky is known as *Vyom Randhra*. This is also the location of the *Vyom Chakra*.

³The four openings or 'doors' of the skull are the following—the two nostrils and two eyes. Through the nostrils the creature inhales and exhales wind which creates a whizzing, hissing or rustling sound when it passes through them; it is symbolically

depicted as the sound made when the string of the bow is pulled and released. The other opening, i.e. the eye is the site of all vision and knowledge acquired by the creature when it sees things in the world. It is a metaphor for the subtle quality of wisdom and enlightenment as well as of deep insight and the sixth sense that any creature possesses.

⁴That is why it is called the seat of Lord Shiva and Shakti because Shiva stands for such virtues as wisdom and enlightenment of the highest order, while Shakti stands for the stupendous authority, powers and potentials that knowledge bestows upon the creature. The forehead is the site of the fore part of the brain much like the headlight on the miner's helmet or the headlight of the car which enables the miner or the driver of the car to see in the darkness. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the practitioner of Yoga who follows the rules and regulations as laid down in this Upanishad is able to see the truth in the light of wisdom and enlightenment that is present in his own head. This area of the head is known as the cerebrum.]

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(IV—B) Brahm Vidya Upanishad

The word 'Brahm' refers to the transcendental supreme Divinity, the cosmic Consciousness and the ultimate Truth of existence, while the word 'Vidya' means knowledge, information, skills and erudition on a subject. Therefore, this Upanishad expounds and elucidates upon the mysterious secrets of Brahm, and it is an exposition on the various means by which this great enigma of creation can be unraveled by a spiritual aspirant. This eclectic and esoteric knowledge opens for him the vast treasury of bliss and contentedness that comes when one has accessed the ultimate goal in one's life, and has discovered the great spiritual 'truth' that can provide him with freedom from the endless cycle of delusions and their attendant miseries and torments.

This Upanishad discusses the ways by which Brahm can be realised by a spiritual aspirant, along with explaining the esoteric and mystical form of that Brahm. It starts with a discussion of the subtle meaning of the four sublime letters that constitute the ethereal word OM which is metaphorically used as a classical synonym of Brahm. It goes on to describe the difference between Brahm, the transcendental and eternal Supreme Being, and the ordinary Jiva, the mortal living being or creature, and how this same Jiva can become as exalted as Brahm and be known as a Hans or a divine Swan when it becomes enlightened about the Atma or the pure consciousness present in his own bosom. This eclectic knowledge about Divinity helps the creature break free from all fetters that shackle him down to this mortal existence, and it paves the way for his obtaining eternity, beatitude and felicity by being liberated from the grossness created by the physical world and the gross body, and instead realising the true nature of one's own self as the Atma that is nothing but the ethereal, subtle and sublime cosmic Consciousness.

The attainment of emancipation and salvation of the soul is the final aim of all spiritual pursuit, and the metaphysical knowledge that empowers the aspirant to achieve this aim is called 'Brahm Vidya'. It is also called so because everything discussed in this Upanishad is aimed at elucidating upon the essential form of Brahm that is ethereal,

divine, truthful and eclectic, and which helps to unravel the great mysteries associated with this enigmatic divine entity besides highlighting the path to be followed for its actual realisation. 'Brahm Vidya' literally means that text which imparts knowledge of Brahm, which enlightens an aspirant about the salient features of Brahm.

In context of this Upanishad, one should refer to some other Upanishads that describe the Atma and are quite similar in tenor and language to this one, e.g. Hanso-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Atma Pujo-panishad of Rig Veda, Brahm Bindu, Dhyan Bindu, Amrit Naad, Shwetashwatar and Tejo Bindu Upanishads of Krishna Yajur Veda, and Atmo-panishad of Atharva Veda. Besides them, the Upanishads that deal with Yoga are equally relevant because Yoga plays an important and leading role in Brahm-realisation. Some of the Yoga Upanishads are (i) Rig Veda—Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad; (ii) Sam Veda—Yog Chudamani and Yog-rajo, Jabal Darshan Upanishad; (iii) Sukhla Yajur Veda—Advaya Tarak, Trishikhi Brahmin, Mandal Brahmin and Hanso-panishad Upanishads; (iv) Krishna Yajur Veda—Dhyan Bindu, Yog Kundalini, Amrit Nada, Kshuriko, Shwetashwatar (Canto 2), Varaaha, Yog Shikha and Yog Tattva Upanishads. Some parts of Tejobindu Upanishad describe the metaphysical importance and spiritual significance of terms used in Yoga texts in its Canto 1, verse nos. 15-19, 25-27, 31-42; and (v) Atharva Veda—Shandilyo-panishad.

1. Now we shall describe the Upanishad called Brahm Vidya. It is by the grace and blessing of the supreme Lord known as Vishnu (the sustainer of creation; the Viraat Purush or the macrocosmic form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm) who is famous for his most marvelous, fascinating and mysterious deeds which are very auspicious and divine by nature that this eclectic but most esoteric and mystical knowledge is revealed for the benefit of all spiritual aspirants. This knowledge is called 'Brahm Vidya' and it is like an eternal and steadily burning fire of knowledge and enlightenment (because it provides the much needed 'light' that illuminates the path for the spiritual seeker of Brahm by enlightening him about the secrets of this divine transcendental supreme Authority of existence) (1).

2. [Verse nos. 2-12 analyse the various metaphysical connotations of the different components of OM. This monosyllabic word stands for 'Pranav' which in turn is an aphorism for the supreme transcendental Divinity, the Absolute Truth and the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. In this context, refer Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 2, 9-18, 37 and 102, besides Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 1-6.]

Those who are experts in the metaphysical knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Being known as Brahm address and recognise him by the monosyllabic word OM. This word OM is known as 'Akchar', i.e. something that is imperishable and perpetual. It is also called 'Akchar' because it consists of one continuous homogenous sound that rolls out like a rumble of the distant cloud. Upon analysis it is determined that this sound OM consists of three distinct subtle letters (A, U and M), and this analogy is used by these experts to explain the three subtle aspects of that Brahm—viz. its body or

form, its habitat or the places where it is deemed to be present, and its planes of existence which are three in number (called the 'Kaal Traya') (2).

[Note—The concept of OM has been explained in great detail in the Dhyān Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 2.]

3. This ethereal and eternal word OM has three Devtas (patron deities)¹, incorporates the three worlds², symbolises the three Vedas³, and has the three forms of the legendary fire element⁴ in it in a latent form. These three letters represent Shiva—one who is auspicious and truthful, is most enlightened, wise and erudite, and is most exalted and pure in nature. Besides these three letters, the complete word OM has a half-syllable called 'Ardha Matra' consisting of the 'Anuswar' or the dot put on the top of the symbol of OM⁵ (3).

[Note—¹The three Devtas are the personification of the three primary forces of Nature—viz. the Fire God, the Water God, and the Wind God.

²The three worlds are symbolised by the three primary words uttered by the creator Brahma at the time of creation—viz. 'Bhu' or the terrestrial world, 'Bhuvaha' or the sky, and 'Swaha' or the heavens. Another interpretation can be the three worlds such as the heavens, the earth and the nether world.

³The three Vedas are the Rig, Sam and Yajur.

⁴The three fires are the Garhapatya or the fire of the household hearth, the Dakshinagni or the fire lit as a witness to charities and donations and other auspicious deeds, and Ahawaniya or the fire lit during a fire sacrifice to invoke the Gods.

⁵In Sanskrit, the dot placed on the top of an alphabet to produce the nasal sound is called an 'Ardha Maatraa'. It is pronounced as 'sum' depending upon the word. Refer Dhyān Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 2 and 17.]

4. Those who are experts in the eclectic knowledge of Brahm have proclaimed and asserted that the symbolic body of the first letter 'A'¹ (of the divine ethereal word OM standing for the supreme transcendental Brahm) consists of the following units—the Rig Veda, the sacred fire called Garhapatya Agni (fire of the household hearth), the Prithivi (earth) element, and Brahma (the creator of the visible world) (4).

[Note—¹The Sanskrit letter 'A' is the first letter of the alphabet and the first basic short vowel sound. It forms the base for pronunciation of all consonants. It sounds similar to the sound of 'o' in the word 'son', or the first vowel 'A' of the English alphabet and used to denote a single entity or as an article in English grammar—e.g. 'a' man. According to metaphysical interpretation, this letter forms the base from which the entire creation has sprung forth. This is drawn from the fact that it is the basic and first sound that emanates from the throat when a person attempts to begin to speak. It symbolically therefore stands for the initiation phase of creation.]

5. The second letter 'U'¹ (of the divine ethereal word OM standing for the supreme transcendental Brahm) consists of the following units—the Yajur Veda, the sacred fire called Dakshinagni (fire lit as a witness to some charitable deed such as giving of donation or alms), the Akash (sky) element, and Vishnu (the sustainer and protector of the visible world) (5).

[Note—¹The Sanskrit letter 'U' is the fifth letter of the alphabet and third short vowel sound. It is sounded as in the word 'full'. According to metaphysical interpretation, this letter stands for the expansion, development and growth of the creation. It is pronounced by cupping the lips in a spout mode, indicating the spewing of the vital spark of life to as long a distance as possible just like a water-syringe is used to sprinkle liquid over a large

area. When a full-throated 'U' is sounded as in the case of an expression of utter astonishment or excitement, or as an exclamation made in immense shock or horror, its sound is heard at a long distance, symbolising the fact that the point of origin of this sound has affected a point far away from it. It is different from the guttural sound which cannot be heard from afar.]

6. The third letter 'M'¹ (of the divine ethereal word OM standing for the supreme transcendental Brahm) consists of the following units—the Sam Veda, the sacred fire called Ahavahaniya (the fire lit during a fire sacrifice to invoke the Gods), the Duo Loka (the heavens and far reaches of the deep space), and the supreme Lord called Ishwar (referring to the Supreme Being) (6).

[Note—¹The Sanskrit letter 'M' is the twenty fifth consonant and the fifth one in the fifth category of consonants headed by the letter 'Pa'. It is the labial nasal, and sounded as 'ma' in mother. This class of Sanskrit alphabets is pronounced by snapping the lips open (e.g. when we say any word beginning with 'P', our lips have to be opened with a snap). In metaphysical terms, the letter 'M' stands for the conclusion of the creation because when we pronounce the word OM, the mouth is finally closed and the lips shut. This is akin to the state of sleep when one closes one's mouth, or the state of dissolution when one has no awareness of the existence of the external world. This 'death like' state is when the entire creation dissolves and merges into its primary form, the invisible and attributeless Brahm from it has sprung forth when the first rumblings of life and activity were symbolised by the appearance of the word 'A'.]

7-8. The letter 'A' is symbolically present in the center or core of the splendorous area that surrounds the celestial Sun. The letter 'U' is similarly located in the center or core of the brightly illuminated area that surrounds the celestial Moon. And the letter 'M' is present in the terrestrial fire that has no smoke (i.e. the fire which is burning brightly) as well as in the fire that is at the heart of the electric or lightening in the sky (i.e. as the stupendous fire element inherently present in electric, enabling the latter to burn anything to ashes in an instant).

Hence, these three letters or syllables should be regarded as being equivalent in their mystical powers and dynamism to the Sun, the Moon and the Fire (7-8).

[Note—The symbolism is very remarkable here. The sun is the harbinger of life on the planet—it provides rains, light, heat and energy. As soon as the sun rises in the morning there is activity and signs of life everywhere, the animals and birds start calling and the man wakes up and normal life with all its accompanying cacophony springs back to life after the sleep of the previous night. This is like the initiating of the new phase or dawn of life by the pronouncement of the letter 'A' by Brahm. Besides this, the Upanishads have uniformly described the Sun God as a visible manifestation of Brahm.

Next comes the Moon and the letter 'U'. The Moon God is the patron God of the Mana, the emotional and sentimental behaviour of a man; he controls the heart and the mind. The moon shines during the night, the period when one makes love to his partner and indulges in the activity of procreation. The letter 'U' stands for expansion of creation, and therefore this procreative activity done during the aegis of the benevolent Moon God is symbolised by saying that this letter is at the core of the moon.

Finally, the letter 'M' stands for conclusion—an obvious allusion to the destructive and ruinous character of the fire element. The lightening and electric are more potent and powerful manifestation of this basic character of the fire to destroy and reduce everything

to ashes. The fire without smoke also refers to the fire that is at its ferocious worst, for a smoldering fire would not burn things as easily as the brilliantly lit fire.]

9. Just like a leaping flame of a fire or an erect flame of a lighted lamp is always located on the upper side of it and faces or moves upwards (instead of downwards), one should understand that the half-syllable (represented by the 'Anuswar') is always placed on the top of Pranav (the word for OM representing the supreme transcendental consciousness known as Brahm) (9).

[Note—The Anuswar is the after sound represented by a dot placed on the top of Sanskrit letter to produce the nasal sound of 'Um' as in the word '*sum*', or as 'Ang' as in '*sung*'. It always belongs to a preceding vowel. In the present case of OM, it belongs to the preceding vowel sound 'A' which stands for the initiator of creative cycle, i.e. the supreme Brahm. Hence it refers to the Ishwar, the Lord God called also as Pranav. When the word OM is sounded in the mind, a resonating effect is produced in the region of the forehead around the tri-junction of the root of the nose and the two eyebrows. This is the symbolic location of the third eye of wisdom, and wisdom and enlightenment are like fire in the sense that they remove the darkness of ignorance and burn all impurities of the mind much like the fire doing the same thing in the physical world.]

10-11. This erect or upwardly facing flame is visualised in the form of a lotus filament. This majestically waving filament of fire represents the Naadi (the tubular duct; the nerve or vein of the physical body of the creature) which is like the Sun in its splendour and potentials. It appears to thread all the other seventy two Naadis in the body and pass through the brilliant Sun (like an arrow passing through the fire to reach the other side) to reach the top of the head (i.e. the cranium, past the cerebrum). It has the divine power to bless everyone and it pervades every aspect of creation (10-11).

[Note—The Naadi referred to here is the Sushumna Naadi which starts at the bottom of the spine and is said to reach the top of the head. It controls the central nervous system. It is obvious that the proper functioning of the central nervous system is at the core of conscious living in this world. The symbolism is very clear—a wise man is able not only to live but to live wisely and intelligently as indicated by the symbolism of this Naadi piercing through the Sun indicating the man's ability to have deep insight and see the truth and real nature of things beyond the blinding dazzle and illusions created by ignorance and delusions.]

12. The sound of OM resembles the reverberating and resonating sound produced by a bronze bell. OM is soothing for the nerves and it vanishes into nothingness just like the sound of the bell vanishing into silence long after it has been rung. The person who understands the import and importance of OM in its entirety is able to attain enduring peace and tranquility (12).

[Note--In other words, this is a symbolic way of saying that a spiritual aspirant can find enduring peace and tranquility by diligently cultivating devotion for the supreme Divinity, the transcendental Being known as Brahm as well as Pranav and represented by the eclectic, ethereal and esoteric word OM, by meditating on this word and by using it as a medium or Mantra to concentrate upon the great Truths of creation to unravel their mysterious secrets. This also helps him to acquire mystical powers that are inherently enshrined in OM and are unleashed once the aspirant is able to unlock its secrets. The spiritual aspirant can reach lofty heights of enlightenment and self-realisation by

contemplating upon the esoteric meanings and significance of the sound elements that constitute the all-pervading cosmic sound OM that ubiquitously pervades throughout the universe in its sky element, and which is a subtle hint of presence of life and consciousness everywhere. The aspirant sort of harnesses the cosmic energy trapped in the sound elements of OM and can use it for his own benefit, whether he is desirous of worldly gains or of spiritual liberation and peace.]

13. The esoteric, mystical and enigmatic entity in which the subtlest element in creation, i.e. the sound, vanishes is known as the supreme transcendental Brahm¹.

Similarly, the Buddhi, which is the intellectual mind and also a subtle element in creation, that submerges itself in meditation and contemplates upon this unknown Brahm is said to be indistinguishable from Brahm and becomes one like the Brahm (because it would remain submerged in and fully occupied with the thoughts of Brahm)².

Resultantly, it would also be like that Brahm and possess or exhibit virtues and characters of Brahm, such as having the eclectic quality of being like the excellent elixir of life known as Amrit that gives everlasting peace and tranquility to the creature³ (13).

[Note—¹When the bell is struck, a sound appears from nowhere, lasts for sometime, and then vanishes into nothingness. It is a physical mystery because no one has seen the place from where the sound had emerged and where it vanishes. Surely there must be some spot from where the sound had come and where it vanished. This unknown and mysterious point source of sound is known as Brahm. It is consciousness personified because only an entity that has 'life' can generate sound, and not a dead entity. A dead man does not speak, and that is why doctors are not satisfied that a person has recovered after some life threatening disease or operation unless he is able to answer questions put to him, i.e. he is able to speak.

Since the word OM encompasses the entire gamut of cosmic sound as well as all the genres of basic sounds that are heard on earth, the hearing of OM in the mind and its attendant soothing effects on the nerves and the resultant peace and tranquility that overtakes the entire being of the spiritual aspirant is tantamount to his being dipped in a pitcher of elixir and drenched in the eclectic virtues of peace and tranquility. His earlier form and nature of being restless and agitated and fragile in temperament is now replaced with that which is one of a calm and serene and stable demeanour. This is what is meant here. When a person becomes Brahm-realised or when he practices meditation by using the word OM, he becomes peaceful and calm, he overcomes his earlier state of remaining in a state of flux and vexed, and instead becomes rested and stable. This is in effect the purpose of Yoga—to bring a harmony between the soul and the supreme Soul, to restore the lost balance between the mortal creature and the immortal being. Thus, concentration on OM has the same effect that is had by Brahm-realisation because OM is a 'sound' manifestation of Brahm.

²We can understand this phenomenon with a simple example. In the cosmos there are certain mysterious spots called the Black Hole. These are collapsed stars which have become so dense that even light cannot escape from their gravitational pull—hence the name 'black' because anything appears to be black when light is completely absorbed by it. Nothing that falls in this 'black hole' escapes, even radiation of the cosmos. Another instance is one looking fixedly or gazing unblinkingly at the fire or a brightly lit flame or the sun for a prolonged period of time—sure enough he would lose sight and would not be able to see anything else. Likewise, when the intellect is focused on Brahm, the latter's powerful attractive powers and stupendous brilliance of consciousness and divinity precludes the chances of the mind and intellect ever moving away from it. It is also like

the case of a less dense object coming into contact with a denser object—the gravitational pull of the large object would trap the smaller object in its grasp.

This macrocosmic divinity known as Brahm is represented by the ethereal word OM which is known as the cosmic Naad or the background noise in the cosmos. This is so overwhelming that when the aspirant meditates using the word OM as a Mantra, the resounding vibrations created by its constant chanting or repetition drowns other sounds and impulses that flow through the sensory nerves of the brain. This effectively blocks them out, and the aspirant submerges in the extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy that this OM produces in his mind by massaging his nerves and titillating them.

When the mind constantly repeats the ethereal Mantra OM and contemplates upon its subtle elements as described in verse nos. 2-8, it becomes so engrossed in it that it forgets about everything else just like a serious student or researcher remains submerged in his study and research so much so that he even remains oblivious of whether it is the day or the night.

³The exalted spiritual stature when this happens is so exhilarating for the aspirant that his condition is comparable to the bee which is drinking nectar from a flower. Like the bee, he too remains oblivious of everything else except the bliss that he gets by this meditation and contemplation.]

14. The Jiva (the living being) is compared to the three subtle elements—the Vayu (wind or air element), the Tej (the dynamic energy, vitality, vigour, stamina, agility etc. that form the inherent quality in a creature), and Akash (the sky and space element).

The dimension or measurement of this Jiva is visualised to be as miniscule as the hundredth part of the tip of a hair follicle (14).

[Note—It is obvious from this dimension that the word ‘Jiva’ does not refer to the physical gross body of the creature. A whale or an elephant for example are not this small! Therefore, the creature or the living being referred to here is its microscopic Atma or soul which is the real identity of the creature. This Atma is the pure consciousness residing in the creature’s bosom in his subtle heart. No part of the gross world is the subject matter of Upanishadic research, for what is obvious and visible need not be researched and looked into. What needs study is something that is not apparent, and not something that is obvious; something that is secret needs to be deciphered, and something that is known by all requires no research.

This invisible and mysterious entity known as the Atma is nevertheless the secret and hidden power-house that runs the visible and the apparent world. This is because if the Atma is removed from the scene, the world would cease to ‘exist’ and ‘live’; it would cease to have any meaning and relevance. This mystery about the Atma arouses curiosity in an enquiring and intelligent mind which gets inspired when it faces something mysterious and unknown which titillates it and provokes it to research and try to unravel its mysteries and the enigma surrounding its existence.

The size of the Atma is compared to the tip of the hair follicle as a means to stress the point that it is too small to be imagined in physical terms in which we are accustomed to measure and visualise the world and its things around us.

Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 9 which also asserts this point.]

15. That Jiva (the creature or the living being represented by the conscious factors of existential life) lives in the symbolic navel of the vast manifested world. That is, this vast visible world has any value and importance because there is life and consciousness at its core for which the navel is a metaphor or symbol. Or, this living world revolves around the central hub known as the Atma or pure consciousness which injects life in the

creature's gross body. [This is because the creature is a microcosm of the entire creation. No one would have given a second glance on this world if there was no life and vitality in it. Thus, the Atma as pure consciousness forms the nucleus (navel or hub) of this creation; life with all its vibrancy and colour revolves around this central core much like a wheel rotates around a central hub.]

This enigmatic entity which is the core (i.e. the truthful essence and the absolute reality) of this world is however different from the world of which it forms the navel¹.

It (i.e. the Atma) is like the Sun that appears to be at the center of the sky to light up the entire world with its brilliant light (just like a lighted lamp lit in the center of a room illuminates the whole room)² (15).

[Note--¹That is, whereas the Atma most subtle and sublime, is pristine pure, immaculate, eternal, imperishable, infinite, all-pervading and consciousness personified, the world of which it is the core on the other hand is gross, corrupted, impermanent, finite and artificial. Though the conscious Atma permeates throughout the length and breadth of the living world in a uniform manner, the latter nevertheless remains gross and perishable.

The physical body of the Jiva or the living being is like the physical gross world that can be visibly seen and verified. But even as this world is not the reality and the true picture of the Atma which is at its core, the gross body of the Jiva is also not its true identity and self though the consciousness flows throughout the gross body.

If we take the example of the wheel, if the central hub is removed then the entire wheel would fall apart and cease to be called a 'wheel'. Similarly, if the Atma is removed, the Jiva and the world would cease to exist and live.

²The Sun is metaphorically like this navel of the creation. It shines and provides the life sustaining factors of heat, energy and light to this world. Besides this, if there was no Sun the planets would run off randomly and collide with each other. It is the gravitational pull of the Sun that keeps the planet dangling in the void of space as well as in their fixed circuits in the vast bottomless space of the sky. One can imagine the all-engulfing darkness of death and doomsday that would surround the creation if there was no Sun. Similarly, the Atma is at the core of creation and life. Had there been no such entity as the conscious Atma, the living world as we know of today would not have come into being in the first place, and this cosmos would have been one big pitch dark void just like a dead body from which the Atma has exited, or would have been as dark, fearful and foreboding as a huge underground dungeon or catacomb of cellars in which the lamp has been extinguished.]

16. The Jiva (i.e. the life-consciousness present inside the gross body of the living creature) involuntarily does a constant Japa of the two holy Mantras—i.e. 'Sa' and 'Ha'¹. [Japa refers to the repetition of an esoteric group of letters which are called a holy Mantra. They are said to possess mystical and divine powers, and are used as a tool to focus attention and energy during meditation and contemplation. The concept of involuntary Japa has been described in verse nos. 78-79 below.]

The mystical effect of this involuntary Japa is that the Jiva (in the form of his subtle Atma or conscious life factor) moves upwards or looks upwards from the 'Nabhi Randhra' (literally the subtle aperture of the body represented by the navel where this life factor is supposed to live)².

This Jiva is not affected by any of the flaws and shortcomings that are inherent to this material world of sense objects³ (16).

[Note--¹When the creature breathes, the inhaled air produces a sound which is equivalent to the letter 'Sa' in the mouth, and the exhaled air produces the sound equivalent of the

letter 'Ha' in the throat. The combined effect is the creature is involuntarily repeating the great Mantra 'So-a-ham', meaning 'that essential and absolute Truth of creation that is known as Brahm is none but I', or 'the supreme Truth is my true self and it is me'. Here 'me' or 'I' refers to the soul. In other words, the creature is involuntarily, at the subtle and atomic level of his existence, recognizing and accepting the spiritual fact that he is not an ordinary component of the world but the supreme Brahm personified in his form. This is called the exalted state of self-realisation and enlightenment.

Since breathing is an automatic and involuntarily exercise done regularly and without any effort whatsoever, when the wise and enlightened aspirant understands that each breath is tantamount to repeating the eclectic Mantra 'Hans', he is deemed to be doing an involuntarily and unbroken Japa day in and day out. Refer Dhyān Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 62-65.

There are a number of Upanishads that elaborately deal with this quintessential Mantra of *Hans*—e.g. (a) Krishna Yajur Veda—Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3-4; Dhyān Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 24, 61-65; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11, and Canto 6, verse no. 20, 52-54. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Hansopanishad is exclusively dedicated to explain the concept of the pure conscious Atma by way of using the metaphor of a Hans. (c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 82-83.

The present Brahm Vidya Upanishad itself has many verses dedicated to this eclectic Mantra—e.g. verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79.

²The *Nabhi Randhra* is the virtual center of the body as the site of the navel. This is because—(a) It is through this cite that the embryo draws its nourishment when it lay in the mother's womb, which is like saying that the lifeless clump of flesh was infused the spark of life and vitality through this hole. (b) It is here that all the Naadis or nerves in the body are said to have their center in the Nabhi Kanda, and it is from here that they radiate out to various parts of the body. (c) The navel is believed to be the center of the Nabhi Chakra, the subtle energy center which is the focus of the sun's energy which is concentrated here. It is in this center where the sun is shining in a symbolic way in the body of the creature like it does in the sky. The point of the sky where the celestial sun is located is regarded as the navel of the Viraat Purush, the invisible, macrocosmic and all-incorporating gross body of the supreme Brahm. The navel of the individual creature occupies the same importance because the latter is regarded as an image of the Viraat Purush. The subtle form of the sun located here energises the body much like the celestial sun energises the world from its center located in the sky.

Since the creature draws its energy, vitality, strength and nourishment from the mother's blood through the placenta attached to the navel, the latter is like the aperture of the mouth through which one draws or sucks in liquids through the bore of a straw dipped in the latter. That is why this navel is called a 'Randhra' which literally means a slit or opening present in the body. This is the picture at the micro level of creation in relation with the individual creature. When it is extended to the macro level, then the cosmic embryo would be the Hiranyagarbha and the subtle aperture from where it draws its nourishment and dynamic creative energy from Brahm to reveal itself in the macrocosmic gross body known as the Viraat Purush would be represented by the celestial Sun. That is why the Sun is regarded as the cosmic center of creativity, energy, vitality and life; it is the cosmic swirling center of dynamic energy. It is like the 'navel' of the Viraat Purush much like the navel that is present in the body of the individual creature because the latter is the microcosmic visible manifestation of the former.]

17. This essential entity known as the Atma (soul or pure consciousness) of the living being (creature) is pure and wholesome like the clarified butter which is extracted by churning the milk, and is a refined and purest essence present in it¹.

This Atma is known by the five dimensions or parameters of life called the ‘Panch Prans’, or the five forms in which life exists in this world² (17).

[Note--¹In other words, the Atma is the purest form of life in this world. It is the real essence of life in all its forms. It is immaculate and uncorrupt; it is wholesome and without any faults associated with the world much like the butter which has nothing to do with the adulteration of milk with water, for once the butter is extracted from milk it loses its wholesomeness. The ‘churning’ of the milk is a symbolic way of indicating that the Atma is hidden in this world and can be known only by diligent effort, by deep research and contemplation, by doing meditation and study.

²The five forms of life or Pran refer to the five basic elements in existence—such as earth, water, fire, air and sky. These five are the fundamental building blocks of life much like the atoms which are at the core of the molecules that combine in various permutations to metamorphose into the uncountable number and variety of gross things in this world. Taken in their physical elementary forms, all of them are lifeless entities, but the great mystery of creation is that the same elements exhibit stupendous life-bearing abilities in this world in their subtle forms. Thus, there must be some mystical power that helps them do so, and it is this power that is being referred to here as the consciousness or Atma. When these elements are injected with the Atma, they begin to show vital signs of life and activity. To illustrate this point, we can take a simple example of a balloon. When the balloon is filled with air, it tosses about on its own; if it is filled with some light gas, it even rises on its own to reach high altitudes. The earth is a lifeless clod of mud or hard rock, but the same earth harbours an astounding variety of vibrant life forms in its bosom. The factor that helps bring about this is known as the Atma.

The five Prans are also called the five forms of the air or wind element which infuses life in the creature’s body. These five vital airs are the following—Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana and Vyana. The statement that ‘the Atma is known by the five dimensions or parameters of Pran’ establishes that the two entities—the Atma and the Pran—are synonymous with each other; they are like the two sides of the same coin known as ‘life’.

The five forms of Prans are called the Atma’s five ‘Kalaas’, and they have been described in verse no. 18 below.]

18. Just like the milk is churned by the churning rod, the main vital wind present in the body, called the Pran, keeps the four other forms or aspects of this vital wind, called its four Kalaas¹, to remain activated and circulating in the body through the medium of the four sections of the heart². [In other words, the breath called the main Pran keeps the body alive, thereby ensuring the heart beats and helps in circulating the blood and the other four forms of the Pran inside the body.] (18).

[Note—¹The word *Kalaa* refers to the different aspects or forms of an entity. The Pran is the vital wind or air element that sustains life in a man. The chief form of this air element that sustains life in the body is called ‘Pran’, and the term is usually applied to the breath. But besides this, there are four other types of main Prans such as Apaana, Samaana, Udaana and Vyana. These are the names given to the vital wind in order to distinguish between the various functions or roles that it performs inside the body. This classification is done in order to study this air or wind element in a comprehensive way just like we classify any given subject into various streams or branches to facilitate study and analysis. Therefore, hypothetically, the Pran is divided into five main Kalaas. Thus, there is the main Pran and its four Kalaas as follows—(i) The ‘Pran’ is the wind element which, as breath, is

exhaled as well as inhaled and is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without the life-infusing breath, no other wind would be of any significance to the creature. (ii) The 'Apan' is the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys). (iii) The 'Samaan' is the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood. (iv) The 'Udaan' is the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough. (v) And finally the 'Vyan' is the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

The main Pran or breath is the one which keeps the entire machinery working. If a man stops to breathe, or when his supply of fresh breath is cut off as in the case of strangulation, then neither can the heart nor the remaining four vital winds can keep him alive. The heart would cease to beat and the other four Kalaas of the Pran would become defunct as soon as the Pran (breath) is cut off.

The breath or Pran is depicted here as a 'churning rod'. If we see the structure of the wind pipe, it indeed looks like a length of pipe, resembling a churning rod, going down into the body from the opening of the nostrils.

From the metaphysical point of view, there is another dimension of this verse. The body of the man is said to have the following five Kalaas which represent the five sheaths that surround his Atma or pure consciousness—the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath, the Pran Maye Kosh or the vital wind or air sheath, the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath, the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath, and the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. These sheaths cover the Atma and determine the Atma's characters, temperament, nature, inclinations and behavioural patterns in this world. The Pran Maye Kosh is the churning-rod here because the rest of the body is kept alive by its energizing and revitalizing effect.

²The heart has four sections—two auricles and two ventricles. The four must work in harmony and with perfect coordination in order to keep the man alive. The Pran as breath keeps the heart beating and supplies fresh oxygen to the body which oxidizes and revitalizes the various tissues and organs of the body while at the same time helping to remove or purge the body of all impurities and toxins such as poisonous gases like carbon dioxide etc. that have accumulated due to metabolic activities inside it.]

19. The great and swift Bird symbolising the Atma or pure consciousness of the creature, which incidentally is the true identity of the latter, resides in a restless manner in this body¹.

When the breath stops, i.e. when the body dies, the living being called the Jiva becomes lifeless or loses all his Kalaas². In other words, when the Pran leaves the body, all other vital signs of life also cease to exist, and the Jiva shows no characteristics and attributes that had distinguished it while it was alive. [This is because all dead bodies are alike. It is only when a man is alive that each individual person depicts his unique personality and character traits, his typical way of speaking, behaving, writing, interacting, thinking etc. So symbolically, when the breath is stopped, he also stops to exhibit his uniqueness and individuality. The 'Jiva' dies as soon as the breath known as the Pran stops. What remains is the 'non-Jiva' aspect of the gross body.] (19).

[Note—¹The Atma is compared to the big bird such as a falcon or eagle or kite which is accustomed to a free-flying life in the sky being suddenly trapped in a small cage. This bird would become extremely agitated and restless.

It is 'restless' in the sense that it is never satisfied with this body and never finds peace while residing inside it. It always wants this and that; it is in a constant state of uneasiness and flux. The bird would be endlessly restless and clawing at the walls of the cage in its attempt to break free; it would be hopping mad from one corner to another in its bid to find a way out of its prison-like confinement though no string might be tied to its legs to keep it in forced bondage and the bird-catcher might even give it proper and adequate food to eat.

It is 'swift' because as soon as it finds an opportunity it would immediately fly off to freedom. Similarly, the Atma takes a fraction of a second to leave the body when the creature dies. There is another connotation to the word 'swift'. The subtle mind is very agile and swift as it keeps on changing from subject to subject like a bird hopping around when picking grains from the ground. Even the gross body is very restless and swift in the sense that it continuously changes position from moment to moment; it is fidgety and twitchy.

In the context of the Atma which represents the creature's 'true identity and his true self', the condition is similar. The bird got caught because of its greediness and ignorance that it is being trapped when it swooped down on the bait shown by the bird-catcher. The Atma similarly got trapped in this body when it got enticed by the attractions and charms of this deluding and entrapping world. Since the world can be enjoyed by the medium of a gross body having organs of perception and action and not in the ethereal form of the Spirit and Consciousness that do not have any grossness in them, the Atma willingly fell in the trap of acquiring a body for its self. It was then too late for it; once inside the body it began to experience its horrors and limitations, and yearned for freedom.

But even as the bird is so stupid that if once given a chance to fly free it would again fall prey to another bait, the Atma of the creature also leaves one body at the time of death and re-enters another body instantly in the hope of further enjoying the material comforts proffered by the material world and the pleasure derived by the gross organs of the body, instead of remaining eternally free like the ethereal Spirit. Another reason for it to enter another body is the fact that in the earlier one the Atma had thought that the deeds done by the body were actually being done by it and therefore it is entitled to their rewards or benefits. Since this is not possible in one life time and also since the last deed done would bear results after some time, the Atma takes another body. Besides this, there are many unfulfilled desires and aspirations of the previous phase of life in the earlier body which needs to be addressed by the Atma. This is the reason for it taking a new birth.

²As has been explained in note to verse no. 18 above, the word 'Kalaa' refers to changeable aspects of an entity. A dead body does not show any signs of life such as movement etc. It remains in a static and unchanging state. This is what is meant here—as soon as the Pran leaves the body, the latter loses all signs of change. The erroneous notion that the creature had harboured that the body is his 'true self' is used here while referring to the body as the 'Jiva'. It has already been said in the first stanza that the Atma is restless and swift—i.e. it is ever changing and agile, an aphorism for having Kalaas.]

20. Such a man who contemplates about and meditates upon the enigmatic and eclectic divine entity that is subtly present in the sky element and which, like the sky, has no attributes and qualifications whatsoever is able to free himself from the fetters that shackle the creature to this world of attributes, qualities, characteristic features and qualifications. [That is, he becomes one like the supreme Brahm which has no attributes,

qualities, characteristic features and qualifications. It is like the case of white light which contains all the seven colours of the rainbow but they remain hidden in its whiteness.]

A self-realised person hears the cosmic vibrations called ‘Anaahat Naad’¹ emanating in his heart from the divine entity in the form of a symbolic ‘Hans’² (a Swan) present there (when it breathes—refer verse no. 16) (20).

[Note—¹Anahat/Anaahat Naad—The word *Anahat Naad* refers to the apparently self-created cosmic sound called ‘Naad’. It is called ‘Anahat’ because it was generated on its own without any apparent cause such as striking of two entities with one another which is the usual cause of generation of sound in this world. It resembles the distant rumbling of clouds or a train trundling along on its track. The Naad Bindu Upanishad of the Rig Veda tradition describes this Naad in great detail. From the point of view of genesis according to the Tantra Shastra which believes that everything in existence originated from Shiva and Shakti (the cosmic male and female elements), a very interesting depiction is given as to how the cosmic Naad came into being and how the rest of creation was revealed from it. Its basic scene is as follows-- According to the philosophy of Tantra Shastra dedicated to the worship of divinity in the form of Shiva and Shakti, the process of creation took the following initial steps. Before anything came into being, Brahm, the supreme consciousness and the ultimate truth of creation, known as Shiva, was established in his own radiant effulgence or self-illumination symbolising his splendourous glory, majesty and divinity. Hence he was called ‘Prakash’, literally meaning light. When he decided to deliberate and actually started the process of deliberation in order to start the process of creation, there was a subtle ‘spandan’ or a slight throb or imperceptible movement which transformed into a vibration. The waves generated by this initial vibration developed in the cosmic ether and gradually coalesced with each other to give rise to higher waves of higher amplitudes. This produced the cosmic sound called the Naad. Since the creation was conceived in the bowl of the cosmic ether, the energy of the initial sound was focused at a central point, called the focal point or the dot or ‘Bindu’. This Bindu contained the combined powers of both the male Shiva and the female Shakti like a dicotyledonous seed which produced the two separate entities called Shiva and Shakti. The union of these two resulted in the unfolding of the rest of the creation. Thus it will be observed that whatever exists in this creation can be traced back to this primeval Naad. Hence, the latter is called ‘Shabda Brahm’, or the Brahm as sound. Therefore it is very natural to assume that all Mantras dedicated to any divine entity and consisting of the sound element (because Mantra consist of letters and words, and are chanted or repeated to make them effective) has its origin in this Shabda Brahm and gets its powers and energy from this Shabda Brahm. In other words, the Mantra contains in itself the essential meaning, form and spirit of the deity whose Mantra it is and which is being worshipped and invoked. Constant repetition of the Mantra generates so much energy in due course of time that the deity being worshipped is revealed. This is because the sound has great powers and energy as is evident when reverberation of sound waves and the resonance created by them are so powerful and forceful that they can shatter sheet glass in windows when an explosion occurs near a building.

Thus we observe that the Naad is the ethereal background reverberating sound energy in Nature which is said to be the primary source of energy that provided the vital spark to set off the chain reaction in the primordial cosmic gel from which the rest of the creation eventually evolved. The Naad has been envisioned in the form of waves in the cosmic ether, the waves which overlapped and coalesced with each other to generate sufficient energy that produces sound which traveled in the sky and was heard by ancient sages and seers who devised the word OM to capture its fundamental tones and notes in the constituent letters or syllables of this OM. Since the primordial cosmic gel was a neutral

and static entity, this energy of sound waves was the first to create some sort of activity in it—like subtly and imperceptibly stirring it from within. This energy multiplies itself manifold and in due course of time the different elements separated from one another, the heavier ones settling at the bottom and the lighter ones going upwards to float on the surface. This is how basically the earth and other elements such as the water and air took up their places in creation, with the heavier earth solidifying at the lower level and the lighter water floating on its outer surface and the air going still higher into the space of the sky. The fire element however remained trapped in the bowls of the earth as the world gradually crystallised into its present shape.

The Naad was envisioned by ancient sages and seers as the cosmic sound having its genesis in the form of waves in the cosmic ether, the waves which overlapped and coalesced with each other to generate sufficient energy that produced the background sound which traveled in the sky and was heard by them during their meditative sessions which lasted for extended periods of time. Now once having heard it, they devised a word to encapsulate its fundamental notes and tones, and they came up with the word OM to capture the essential mode in which this cosmic Naad was heard by them. When they revealed this secret to their disciples, it was through the word OM, and they went on to analyse this sound and deciphered its components as the basic letters that constitute it, i.e. A, O, U and M. Refer to Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 6.

Since the primordial cosmic gel was a neutral and static entity, this energy generated by the sound waves was the first to create some sort of activity in it—like subtly and imperceptibly stirring it from within. This energy multiplied itself manifold and in due course of time the different elements present earlier in the homogenous cosmic gel separated from one another to give it a heterogeneous character, the heavier ones settling at the bottom and the lighter ones going upwards to float on the surface. While this process was progressing, the elements captured or soaked energy according to their capacity much like sponge soaks water or earth attracts anything by its gravitational pull.

This is how basically the earth and other elements such as the water and air took up their respective places in creation, with the heavier earth solidifying at the lower level and the lighter water floating on its outer surface and the air going still higher into the space of the sky. The fire element however required a medium to hide itself in because the water and air were inimical to its existence; the water would douse it and the wind would blow it out of existence. Therefore it hid inside the bowls of the earth and entered subtly into things originating from earth. That is why it is present even under the vast reservoir of water known as the ocean, and at the same time lives subtly inside everything that grows on earth, such as food. The creator is so wise that he has this tremendous source of life, energy and vitality in the earth because he knew that if life is to be made sustainable it would need a viable source of self-sustenance in the form of an inexhaustible source of energy. Finally, the grossest element known as the earth also solidified into its present shape.

Since the Atma is the only conscious factor in creation showing basic elements of the existence of life in any of its myriad forms, and the Naad is also the first sign of primordial activity in the cosmos, it naturally follows that the Atma, the 'soul or life' of all that exists in Nature, and the Naad, the primary source from which the entire creation is said to have evolved and derived its energy, are synonymous with each other. This fact has been endorsed by Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse 3 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which says that the Atma is synonymous with the Naad. This cosmic Naad is still hearable when one closes one's ears when one hears the roaring sound of the blood flowing through the veins and arteries inside the body.

But the cosmic Consciousness called the Atma is not such an easy thing to understand, because the same Tejobindu immediately asserts in the following verse no. 4 of its Canto 5 that the the Atma is even beyond the concept of Naad. It is because the Naad has been visualised in the form of the cosmic ethereal subtle sound heard when one pronounces the word OM. It is believed that it is from this OM that the rest of the creation has evolved, i.e. Naad and OM have some 'beginning', no matter how ancient and primary. On the contrary, the Atma is said to be 'eternal and infinite, having no beginning and end, and even outlasting the end of the present creation and preceding the next one'. The Atma is the eternal cosmic consciousness which initiates the process of creation, and hence of Naad in the first place. It's not the other way round.

In order to understand the genesis of creation in terms of Naad, this cosmic sound represented by the word OM has been broken up in its constituent sound elements represented by the various letters and syllables such as A, U, O and M. These alphabets symbolise the basic forms in which sound representing cosmic energy in its most fundamental and basic form exists in this creation. Then each unit is further analysed and assigned symbolisms—such as the letter 'A' for example was envisioned to represent the appearance of the first signs of creation, the letters 'U' and 'O' for its evolvment, development, expansion and growth, and 'M' for its conclusion. Then a geometrical symbol was devised to physically depict this word OM, and it is 'ॐ'.

Sound has its own classifications which are used in the field of learning music. But the Atma is such a unique and magnificent entity that even though it has been said that it is like the cosmic sound called the Naad in this Upanishad's verse no. 3 as stated above, but it is only to emphasise the fact that like the Naad it too is a cosmic and enigmatic phenomenon, but this observation should not be treated too literally because the Atma is much superior to the Naad and does not qualify to be treated at par with any physical phenomenon like the Naad. The Naad is actually (physically) heard by ascetics who have risen above certain level in their meditation much like the Atma which is also experienced and witnessed by all spiritually enlightened aspirants.

But the comparison ends there, for the Atma cannot be analysed and classified and mastered like the sound element is done by an expert musician who can fiddle and play around with it to create masterpieces of music, or by teachers of metaphysics and theology who try to explain the complex phenomenon of creation by using the word OM as some model in a science laboratory.

The Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 5, verse no. 2 asserts that the *Naad* is a manifestation of the cosmic Consciousness. The Hansopanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 16-17 describes the sound emanating from this Naad, while verse no. 18-20 describes its effect on the body. Refer also to Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Brahmin 2, section 2, verse no. 2; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition in its verse no. 2-3, 37 and 102.

²The concept of 'Hans' has been explained in note of verse no. 16. Refer also to verse nos. 21-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79 of the present Brahm Vidya Upanishad.

This swan is the pure consciousness living inside the subtle heart, and the Anaahat Naad is the sound that is heard when this swan breathes. This concept has been elaborately explained in the Hansopanishad belonging to the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition amongst other Upanishads.]

21-22. This pure consciousness, which is likened to a divine Hans or Swan, is eternally blissful and self-illuminated. A wise and erudite person who is able to go beyond the two phases of breathing process called Rechak and Purak (exhalation and inhalation

respectively), and instead hold the breath inside the body as done during the Kumbhak phase of meditation exercises called Pranayam, is able to merge the two vital winds called Pran and Apaana in the region of the Naabhi Kand (i.e. in the region of the navel)¹.

Consequently, he becomes so focused and concentrated in hearing this Anaahat Naad reverberating around him as he becomes completely engrossed in drinking the nectar-like elixir of bliss and spiritual ecstasy called Amrit dripping from the subtle sky located in his head² (21-22).

[Note--¹The word Rechak refers to elimination or purging and hence stands for the Apaana wind, while Purak refers to filling and hence it refers to Pran wind or breath which fills the body with oxygen and life. When an ascetic stops breathing, it is obvious that these two forms of winds would mix with one another as there are no water-tight compartments in the body to separate them. Now where is it done? This is answered here—'in the region of the navel'. This is because when the breath is held, the abdomen acts like the pitcher in which the air is filled. The navel is the metaphoric center of this pitcher-like abdomen, hence the symbolism. All the Upanishads dealing with Yoga describe how these two winds are mixed by doing Pranayam.

²The is a remarkable observation. The reverberating humming heard by the ascetic is like the humming of the honey bee, and the dripping of the nectar from the head is like the dripping of the honey from the honeycomb hanging high up as symbolised by its presence in the head. The divine swan is the Atma as the pure conscious 'self' of the man, and the Naad heard is the resonating sound that is heard by ascetics when they meditate upon OM. This can be practically heard by an ordinary man also and its process has been elaborately described in Upanishads dealing with Yoga.

In practical terms this verse means that when a spiritual aspirant practices Pranayam, he is able to bring together the vital winds in the body, such as the Pran and the Apaana. Hitherto they had different directions of movements—for while the Pran was located in the upper part of the body in the lungs and nostrils and moved upwards, the Apaana was located in the intestines and moved downwards. Due to Pranayam and the closure of the body's apertures called the 'nine doors of the body', all the vital winds present inside the body get mixed and their energy is coordinated to help the aspirant achieve the spiritual high of extreme bliss and ecstasy. Refer verse nos. 66-68 and 75 in this context which describe this concept in detail. The incarcerated wind gets heated and agitated while it violently swirls inside the abdomen, dashing with each other and gaining in energy and heat. This helps to build up the pressure inside the body and the vibrations caused by these clashing winds build up to reach a crescendo that is heard as the reverberating Naad in the head in the form of a resonating buzz or hum. This is aided and compounded by the constant chanting of the Mantra OM. The resultant effect is an overlapping of waves and compounding of frequencies which have an astounding affect on the nerves of the practitioner of Yoga and he experiences an extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy.

This phenomenon is metaphorically depicted in the form of dripping drops of Amrit from a pitcher held aloft in the head much like the honey is squeezed from a full honeycomb dangling from the branch of a tree. The 'squeezing' here is done by the pressure of the heated and energized vital winds of the body. In fact, the nerves are massaged and titillated to such an extreme level that the practitioner experiences only exhilaration to the exclusion of all other types of sensory perception such as pain and worries that had been tormenting him till this exalted state is reached. He does not want to revert back to his earlier time of miseries and wishes to put it behind him. This is a symbolic way of saying that he has found the eternal fountain of bliss and happiness through the practice of Yoga.]

23-24. Those wise ones who symbolically pour a stream of this elixir on the divine deity called Mahadeva (literally the 'great God' or Lord Shiva), located in the region of the navel and whose form is like a lighted lamp, while doing Japa with the Mantra 'Hans-Hans'¹ are blessed with being free from various diseases such as the degenerating effects of old age culminating into death. [That is, such a man acquires robust health and maintains it even in his old age; he dies peacefully without having to undergo the usual torments associated with old age and death.]

He is also becomes eligible to acquire the various mystical powers called Siddhis² such as Anima etc. [That is, he acquires special powers by preserving his vital energy, stamina and vitality.] (23-24).

[Note—¹The word *Hans* has two components—Ha + Sa. It comes by reversing the great saying 'So-a-Ham' meaning 'that essence or truth is me'. So when the self-realised man repeats this Mantra, he is in effect asserting that he has realised who he actually is. He affirms that he is not an ordinary man with the body, but that divine Being known as the Brahm who resides in his heart as the pure consciousness or Atma. The bird swan is chosen to represent him because this bird is deemed to be very pure and selective in what it accepts and what it rejects. It is known to select pearls from an assortment of gems, and drink milk and leave its water content. Similarly, the wise man is expected to pick the truth from amongst the basket of assorted charms present in this creation and leave aside the non-truths. The concept of Hans have been described elsewhere in this Upanishad also, such as verse nos. 16, 20-22, 25-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79.

²The *Siddhis*—The word Siddhi refers to various mystical and occult powers that a spiritual aspirant acquires as a result of certain ritualistic practices.

There are eight Siddhis which are divine mystical powers which enables the person to accomplishment astounding feats. They are the following— (i) 'Anima' means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) 'Mahima' is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one's achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) 'Garima' is to have weight, stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) 'Laghima' is to have simplicity and humility; (v) 'Praapti' is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) 'Paraakram' is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) 'Ishwatwa' is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) 'Vashitwa' is to be able to control and subdue others.

The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 151-155 classifies all Siddhis into two categories—Kalpit and A-Kalpit. The Kalpit Siddhis are the ones which are created with efforts made for them using various means and methods. They have a limited scope, are perishable, and have imaginable powers and potentials that can be predicted. On the other hand, the A-Kalpit Siddhis are those which are self-generated or uncreated by any artificial means, are natural and with unimaginable mystical potentials and powers that cannot be predicted.

Refer also to Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 46-55 and Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 56-102.]

25. A wise and enlightened man who is constantly involved in pursuing this spiritual path of Brahm-realisation is indeed able to attain the exalted stature of the supreme Lord known as Ishwar. In other words, he becomes one with Ishwar. There are a number of enlightened people who have successfully done this (25).

26-28. There is no other way to spiritual eternity and attainment of an exalted stature of being one with the supreme Brahm except following this path known as 'Hans Vidya' (as described in the forgoing verses). Any wise and enlightened man who imparts this great, eclectic, most magnificent and holy spiritual knowledge called Hans Vidya to an eager seeker should be duly respected, honoured and served by all. Whatever good or bad (acceptable or unacceptable, liked or disliked, compatible or incompatible, pleasant or unpleasant, comfortable or uncomfortable, reasonable or unreasonable) instructions that such an exalted Guru (teacher) gives to his disciples should always be obeyed by the latter without raising any questions and in a calm manner. [Obviously, such a wise and enlightened teacher would not give instructions that would harm the self-interest of the disciple or would violate the codes of conduct which deal with righteousness and auspiciousness.]

One should accept this eclectic knowledge from the wise teacher and then ensure that the teacher is served to the best of his abilities. [This is because such knowledge is hard to come by, and there are few enlightened souls who would be willing to impart it to others. This knowledge is like the gem amongst the entire body of spiritual knowledge that is available to a man; this knowledge is so precious and priceless that no material wealth in this world can weigh even a fraction of its importance. Therefore, the recipient of this knowledge has a moral obligation towards his Guru, and this obligation is so great and binding upon him that he in spite of his serving the teacher with the best of his ability and with full sincerity he would still be indebted to his teacher; he would still feel that he could have done more if given a chance.] (26-28).

29. By the blessings of the enlightened and honest Guru, one becomes enlightened about one's own 'self', and this leads him to become enlightened about the essence of the Atma residing in his own bosom. This Atma of his is synonymous with the cosmic, all-pervading, quintessential and ubiquitous supreme Atma or soul of everything in existence, and the latter is called cosmic Consciousness or Brahm. This helps one to become steady in his convictions and beliefs; he gets firmly established in this knowledge because it has come through 'self-realisation' and not something which is merely based on hearsay or conjecture.

When he understands the reality and comes to terms with the essential and absolute Reality and Truth of existence, the rest of the things in this creation become superficial and redundant. He does not care about the different codes of conduct to be followed or about the sanctions or restrictions imposed upon individuals depending upon the Varans or classes of society to which he belongs, or the worldly traditions that are meant to be followed by all living creatures having a gross physical body with which they interact with other members of the society. For a self-realised man who has known the nature of the true 'self' as the Atma and not the body, such regulations, codes of conduct and traditions pertaining to worldly behaviour become unnecessary, obsolete and redundant. This is because for such an enlightened man all creatures become one Atma instead of distinct living beings having different bodies. He has discovered the 'truth' of existence and the reality of what constitutes a living creature—consequently for him the gross physical body and identification based on it become irrelevant. Thus, for such an enlightened man all classes of human beings become one irrespective of their birth, clan, nativity, age, sex, colour of skin, vocation etc. because he has realised the

fundamental truth that the body is not one's true self, but it is the Atma and this Atma is the same in all persons (29).

[Note—The Atma is the universal Spirit that is invisible, immanent, ubiquitous and uniform in the entire creation. The Atma as the pure consciousness is the true 'self' of all living creatures, while the gross body which the world recognises as the creature is merely a dwelling in which this invisible Atma lives. Whereas the Atma is immaculate, taintless, eternal and imperishable, the body is perishable and subject to deformities of old age and sufferance such as diseases. So when a wise man who has known the spiritual secrets revealed in the Upanishads and has verified their trustworthiness, truthfulness and applicability in practice by constant meditation, contemplation and observation of life in the real world deals with other creatures, he does so from a high level of wisdom, knowledge and enlightenment. This ensures that he sees behind the external façade of delusions and falsehood and realises that the person with whom he is dealing is not the physical body but the Atma in that body. Since the Atma in all living beings is the same, it obviously follows that all living beings are the same in their essential form and nature.

Ancient sages and seers had formulated certain laws and regulations in order to maintain orderliness in society, but all pertain to the physical gross body and not to the Atma simply because the latter is an ethereal Spirit which cannot be restricted and butted and bounded like the gross body.

Therefore, a person who has in-depth knowledge of the Hans Vidya knows that all the creatures (human beings for instance) who breathe are actually Brahm in that form. He realises that the entity who is breathing and making the subtle sound of 'Hans' while doing so as described in verse no. 16 is the real living entity who is known as the 'living being or creature', and the latter's true identity is the pure consciousness known as the invisible Atma and not the gross physical body in which it lives as a temporary dwelling in this world. Since the world is accustomed to recognizing things that are easily seen instead of things that cannot be seen, it usually recognises the gross body that is visible as the creature's identity instead of the Atma which is invisible.

A wise man would like to deal with the truth, and hence would like to deal with this Hans that resides in the gross body of the creature instead of the latter. Since the Hans is the Atma which is constant and uniform in all the creatures, it follows that he would treat all living beings alike without any discrimination, equally and with equanimity. For him no one is an enemy and no one is a friend.]

30. Similarly, he abandons getting perplexed by so many versions of scriptures (because he has already understood the basic truth that they all attempt to explain in different ways). Instead, he should serve his Guru diligently and with devotion. [This is because this Guru has helped him save his precious time and energy by helping him to know what he set out for, without letting him get bogged down in voluminous scriptures and getting lost in their maze. A disciple should indeed be obliged and grateful to such a teacher.] By following this path, a man finds true welfare and auspiciousness (30).

31. The Guru is Lord Hari (Vishnu, the supreme Lord) personified. He is nobody else. This is the assertion of the Vedas (Sruti) (31).

32. Whatever the Vedas (Sruti) say is indeed auspicious and trustworthy; there is no doubt in what they say. If one doubts them, if one questions their authenticity and truthfulness, if one begins to contradict, ridicule, doubt and flay them, then nothing is left by which things in this world can be judged as to their truthfulness or otherwise. There

would be no standard criterions, yardsticks or touchstone left against which other things can be weighed or measured or compared, and their certainty, truthfulness, reality or trustworthiness be ascertained. Anything that has no proof or certainty, anything that is not based on some reliable criterion, anything of which the truthfulness or trustworthiness cannot be unequivocally confirmed or positively ascertained would be ruinous and harmful in the long run. [It would be based on hearsay and conjecture, and would be like the mirage seen in a desert. When a person is not certain of the value of anything or not certain of the goal he is pursuing in life, he would be listless and like a ship adrift on a choppy ocean—tossing around and causing immense hardship for the passengers and the sailors alike. He would be agitated and restless, he would be skeptical and apprehensive, he would be lacking in drive and motivation, and he would be a fertile breeding ground for doubts, confusions, perplexities and vexations. Every now and then he would try to find out his bearings and much of his energy and time would be spent in this than the actual pursuit of the goal. He would be literally going round and round in a wild goose chase. Even if has accessed pure gold, he would still be miserable and regard himself as penniless because he does not know what he has and what is its value.] (32).

33. The consciousness present in the gross body of the creature called the Jiva-atma should be regarded as the one that has different Kalaas, i.e. as the one which shows various attributes and characteristic qualities and features typical or specific to that body. On the other hand, the same consciousness when it is freed from the limitations and tainting effects of the gross body becomes free from these limiting factors and thus becomes one without any Kalaas, i.e. it has no attributes or special characteristic features that are specific to it, that can limit its virtues and qualities to a particular set of attributes and characteristics¹. [Refer verse nos. 37-40.]

This eclectic and divine knowledge that is received by the grace of an enlightened Guru, who is himself self-realised and enlightened, is universal and uniform. This knowledge enlightens the aspirant of the fact that the Atma is to be realised as being the pure and true 'self' of all the living beings, including the aspirant himself. It is the same in all the creatures; it has none of the attributes exhibited exclusively by any one sample creature. Externally all the living beings exhibit different characters and attributes which are specific to each one of them simply because the gross body is a variable and changing entity as compared to the Atma, and it is the gross body that is usually regarded as the identity of the creature simply because it is easily visible and easy to deal with as compared to the invisible Atma which is an ethereal spirit.

So, two creatures appear to be different from one another because their bodies are wrongly treated as their identity instead of their Atma which is actually their true 'self'. Since this error creeps in, the perception about the creature changes—i.e. the immaculate, immutable, uniform, eternal and imperishable Atma appears to be tainted and ever-changing. Therefore, obviously, when the gross body is removed from the scene, what remains is the pure consciousness or the Atma which is always and invariably the same in all the creatures irrespective of the type of the body that they have (33).

[Note—¹To understand this phenomenon we can take a simple example. Water in its purest form consists of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen. But this water assumes so many shapes and colours according to the vessel in which it is kept, or it acquires so many tastes such sweet or salty, or is assigned such attributes as being hot, warm, cold, scalding, boiling etc. Then this same molecule of water has different names

such as water, vapour, moisture, ice, snow, rain, sleet, river, stream, ocean, sea, lagoon, lake, pond, well and puddle. Is there any fundamental difference in water molecule in any of these different varieties of water bodies? No, certainly not. The same thing applies to the Atma which is also atomic and microscopic like the basic unit of water called its 'molecule'. When the Atma is seen in the context of the physical body of the creature, it shows so many attributes, but shorn of this body and seen in its pristine pure form it becomes an entity that is one and non-dual.]

34. A wise and enlightened man who remains engrossed in repeating the eclectic and divine Mantra 'Hans-Hans' (i.e. '*So-a-Ham' meaning 'that essence or Truth or Brahm is me') is indeed an auspicious personification of the Trinity Gods, i.e. of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder. He can be successful, by the grace and blessing of his enlightened Guru, in becoming aware or realising the ubiquitous supreme Brahm who all-pervading, all-encompassing and all-incorporating (34).

[Note—Refer verse nos. 16, 23-24, 61-64, 78-79 also. This Mantra *So-a-Ham is also prescribed in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 132.]

35. Just like oil is present in the sesame seed and fragrance is inherent in flowers, the same universal Brahm is uniformly present inside as well as outside the body of a human being (just like the same air is present inside and outside of a hollow pitcher) (35).

[Note—The word 'Brahm' refers to its microcosmic part as the pure conscious Atma.]

36. Even as the lighted torch is abandoned as it is rendered useless after one has seen or found the thing that was being searched with the help of its light, a wise person is one who leaves the instrument of Gyan (information, knowledge and their intelligent application), which was being used by him to successfully study, analyse, deduce and obtain access to the object of his intellectual pursuit, once his aim is fulfilled (36).

[Note—In other words, once a wise man has realised the truth about Brahm, which was only possible by application of intelligent and analytical mind and its various faculties as well as by taking help from external sources such as the scriptures and the teacher, he no longer needs them just like a professional man no longer needs his college text books once he has mastered the subject and passed the exam. The word Gyan has a wide application here, such as the use of the brain's intellectual faculties, its analytical, thinking and rationalizing abilities as well as so many other intangible aspects of the consciousness that come under the general terms such as the person's own sixth sense, his intuition, his moral and spiritual background, certain special divine qualities that he carries which enable him to do stupendous tasks not within the reach of others, his diligence and perseverance etc. which all together lend a combined helping hand to him to successfully reach his lofty goals and attain things not even imaginable by others.

In the context of metaphysics and spiritualism, this goal of knowledge is Brahm-realisation and self-realisation; to understand the real Truth and separate it from the apparent truth. It is the pursuit to find out the 'absolute and irrefutable truth' of existence and solve the eternal riddle about one's true identity, origin and form as well as the destiny of the creature and how to break free from the endless cycle of miseries and agonies associated with this mundane world and its vicious entrapments. Once this spiritual goal is successfully reached, once the man becomes self-realised and Brahm-realised, then the medium of Gyan becomes redundant much like one no longer needs the

boat once the river is crossed. The wise man would proceed with his journey instead of clinging to the boat or dragging it along or carrying it on his head! One reads the scriptures, studies them, discusses them and hears them preached by erudite scholars only till the point their essence is not grasped; after that they are no longer needed.]

37. [Verse nos. 37-40 describe the concept of ‘Kalaa’ vis-à-vis the living creature. In this context, refer also to verse no. 33 above.]

The entity that has a definable and tangible form, characteristic features, qualities and attributes which gives it its individuality is regarded as ‘Sakal’, i.e. one that has one or more Kalaas. Such entities are gross and have a physical dimension. On the other hand there are certain things which do not come under this definition; they are called ‘Niskal’, i.e. one that has no Kalaas. Such entities are subtle, ethereal and sublime; they lack a physical dimension.

To illustrate, the flower is Sakal, while its fragrance is Niskal. Similarly, the tree is Sakal, while its shade is Niskal (37).

[Note—The flower has a gross body and a physical structure, it can be touched, seen and felt, but its fragrance is a subtle thing that cannot be even precisely defined. Similarly, the tree has a definitive form and characteristic features; it is vibrant and colourful; it is full of variable life forms and a resting place for a wide variety of insects, birds and centipedes. On the other hand, its shade is obviously something that no one can touch, smell and precisely describe; it is dark, gloomy and intangible; it has no trace of life whatsoever in it.]

38. In the aforesaid way, one can observe the existence of both the Sakal and the Niskal aspects of creation everywhere in this world. The entity that comes under the ambit of the definition of Sakal is a medium or instrument or aid which is employed or used to arrive at or to know or to deduce or to learn about or to gain access to the entity that comes under the ambit of Niskal (38).

[Note—The different scriptures and other means of acquiring the knowledge of the quintessential truth of the supreme transcendental Brahm would come under the category of Sakal because they are tangible and known instruments employed to arrive at some other entity that is intangible and unknown. The latter is Niskal in the sense that it is most sublime and subtle, having no attributes and definitions applicable to it in a specific manner. The Sakal is one which has Kalaas, which has certain attributes and qualifications, while Niskal has no Kalaas, it has no attributes and qualifications. In the instance cited in verse no. 37, when one sees a particular flower one immediately gets an idea of the type of fragrance that it emanates. Similarly, when one sees a tree from afar one instantly gets an idea of the type of shadow it produces and the area this shadow covers. For instance, when a group of people look for shade on a hot summer day, they search for a tree that is large and has a huge cover of foliage because they take it for granted that its shade would be large and dense enough for them to rest.]

39. An entity that is described as being ‘Sakal’ has one or more Kalaas (aspects, forms, fractions, attributes, qualities, qualifications etc.) in it as its integral part or characteristic feature. On the other hand, that which is said to be ‘Niskal’ has no such limitations imposed upon it. [That is, the Niskal entity is immutable, indivisible, non-dual and one single subtle and sublime whole. It cannot be portioned or partitioned into segments or fragments that have specific Kalaas for study and analyses, or for any other reason.]

Those entities that come under the definition of Sakal (i.e. ones that have various Kalaas) have one, two and three Kalaas. They are differentiated by and classified into different classes or segments based on the number of Kalaas they have (39).

[Note—This is a very interesting verse. Let us see how it describes the various levels of creation in an encrypted language. The living world consists of both the animals as well as the plants. The basic life forms have one or two Kalaas to start with, and then it progresses to the level of humans and Gods having five and more Kalaas.

The creatures in the living world have been classified into four categories and their respective Kalaas are as follows—(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kalaa called Anna Maye Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swadej—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Kalaas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Kalaas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kalaa refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jarayuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Kalaas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. The last Kalaa refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Kalaas. Besides the four Kalaas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.

Since the present verse deals with one, two and three Kalaas, it refers to the Udbhij, Swadej and Andaj class of creatures.]

40. That which is half of a Kalaa, i.e. one that is so small and miniscule that it is not even one single unit or Kalaa of any given entity but is only a fraction of it (that is, an entity that is smaller than one molecule and only a part of it, i.e. the atom), is to be regarded as 'Paraa', literally meaning knowledge of things that are beyond the range of perception and comprehension, or that which is subtle and sublime (in the sense that it is invisible, miniscule and microscopic as compared to the Kalaa which has grosser and more tangible form). [This refers to the subtle body of the creature such as his mind and intellect, as well as his various qualities which form his basic character but which cannot be physically seen or felt. These effect his Atma, which is a fraction of what the supreme transcendental Brahm is, hence most apt to be called one with the 'half Kalaa'.]

Beyond the state of Paraa, or one that transcends this state, is called 'Paraatpar', literally which is beyond the furthest point of imagination and comprehension, something that transcends the boundary of knowledge and comprehension. [This refers to the supreme transcendental Brahm who has no Kalaa or embodies all the Kalaas in him to form a one single immutable whole.]

In this way one should recognise this world as having five subtle forms and five grosser forms¹ (40).

[Note--¹The figure of 'five' is arrived as follows—entity with one Kalaa + entity with two Kalaas + entity with three Kalaas (as described in verse no. 39) + entity with half Kalaa + entity that has no Kalaa (as described in verse no. 40) = 5. This obviously covers the entire gamut of creation for the following reason.

The five *subtle forms* of Kalaa are the five vital winds such as Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana and Vyana. The vital winds are synonymous with life and consciousness in a living creature—see verse no. 17.

The other subtle Kalaas of the creature are its five Koshas or sheaths that surround its Atma. They are the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath, the Pran Maye Kosh or the vital wind sheath, the Mano Maye Kosh or the mind sheath, the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath, and the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. It is the last that encloses the Atma.

Besides them, there are the five states of existence of consciousness—viz. the Jagrat or waking state, the Swapna or dreaming state, the Sushupta or deep sleep state, the Turiya or the post-deep sleep state of Samadhi, and the Turiyateet or the transcendental state of Smadhi at its pinnacle.

The five *grosser forms* of Kalaa are the five elements of creation such as earth, water, fire, air and sky. Since all of these are part or fraction of the same Brahm, they are all the various Kalaas of Brahm. The entire living creation is manifested from these five Kalaas because the grosser forms or elements are the building bricks for the gross body of the creature, and the subtler forms such as the different Prans infuse life in this gross body and live inside it in a subtle and imperceptible form.]

41. Brahm, the supreme creator in his role as Brahma, the grandfather of creation and patriarch who has created the visible world, has his symbolic residence in the heart of a man, Vishnu (the protector and sustainer) in the throat, Shiva (the concluder) in the palate or back of the mouth near the glottis, and the great Lord called Maheshwar (here referring to the supreme transcendental Brahm) in the forehead (in the region of the cerebrum) (41).

[Note—The symbolisms are easy to understand. The heart is the seat of all emotions and sentiments, and of such qualities as love, infatuation and affection. When one falls in love with someone, one's 'heart' is involved in the entire process. So the heart is the symbolic habitat of Brahma, the creator, because the process of creation is replicated by a man in his love making exercise in which the heart plays a dominant role. Besides this, the heart is also the abode of the pure consciousness called the Atma. This heart is the subtle heart and is said to be like a lotus. This is therefore the abode of Brahm, the Supreme Being in the form of the Atma.

The throat is the location of two vital functions of the body—it is through it that food passes down the gullet into the intestines to be digested and nourish the body, and it is through here that the wind pipe passes that takes air inside the body during inhalation and brings polluted air out of the body during exhalation, thereby helping the man to remain alive. Since Vishnu is assigned the duty of sustenance, nourishment and protection in creation, his abode here is understandable.

When a man is about to die, his glottis shuts tight and he is unable to eat or drink, and neither can he breathe due to shutting down of the trachea. His tongue clings to the roof of the mouth and virtually acts like a cork shutting tightly the neck of the bottle. This biological phenomenon is metaphorically represented by the presence of Shiva at this point of the body. This is because, one, Shiva is the patron God of death and conclusion of creation, and second, this is equivalent to doing the 'Khechhari Mudra' which is the toughest form of Yoga which liberates the practitioner's Pran or his vital life-forces from the shackling effect of the gross body and provides him with liberation. This liberation is called 'Kaivalya Mukti' in the sense that there is no reverting to the gross body any more and the liberation is final. This is also called 'dissolution' of the Atma and its final merger with the supreme Atma of creation. Refer Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 78-92.

Finally, the brain is located at the top of the body in the head, and it is the seat of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, skills, expertise and scholarship, virtues deemed to be synonymous with those who are wise, learned and enlightened. Therefore, it is the symbolic seat of Brahm. The Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 26-32 describe the symbolic location of these Gods of the Trinity in the context of Yoga.]

42. At the tip of the nose, the 'Achut'¹ is said to have his abode, while at the root of the nose (i.e. at the base of the nostrils where the two eyebrows meet) is established the 'Param Pad'². There is nothing better than the Param Pad because it is the best and the most exalted stature or abode or state of existence (as it represents the state of enlightenment and self-realisation as well as Brahm-realisation) (43).

[Note—¹The word *Achut* refers to one that is immaculate and dignified, one who is exalted and firmly established in his dignified form, one who is steady and unwavering in his high pedestal, one who cannot be demoted or downgraded—here referring to the supreme transcendental Brahm as visualised by ascetic while meditating.

²The *Param Pad* literally refers to a stature that is supreme and the highest state of existence of a man. It is the highest pedestal on which a man can stand. It refers to being enlightened about the true nature of the pure conscious self and of Brahm. With this realisation, a man is said to have reached the highest citadel of spiritual achievement that has been described by the scriptures as his ultimate goal in life.]

43. The disembodied supreme divine Being (Brahm) should be visualised as being established at a distance measuring twelve fingers width above the tip of the nose, while the all-pervading and all-encompassing ubiquitous supreme Lord (Brahm) is envisioned as being present in the 'Sahasraar Chakra' (a swirling subtle energy center located in the head having a serrated saw-like edge with thousands of sharp points)¹ (43).

[Note—¹In other words, the practicing ascetic should visualise the supreme transcendental and formless Brahm as being present in the area around the head. Brahm is synonymous with wisdom, erudition, knowledge and enlightenment as it is omniscient and all-knowing. Brahm is the cosmic Consciousness and the Absolute Truth of creation. Brahm has the form and contours of the sky element amongst its numerous forms and contours. Brahm's symbolic manifestation in a visible form, complete with its dazzling splendour and life-giving and life-sustaining virtues as the celestial Sun at the cosmic level, and the pure consciousness or the Atma at the individual level of the creation. That is why a glowing halo of light is iconographically depicted around the head of self and Brahm realised persons. This halo around their heads is indicative of the presence of Brahm there as clearly said in the present verse.

Does it mean that Brahm is not present there in those who are not self-realised or Brahm-realised? No, that is not the case—just as the cloud in the sky blocks out the shine of the Sun, the spiritual impurities that cling to such people prevent this light of Brahm from shining through.]

44. In spite of the mind of an expert ascetic wandering from place to place and his eyes flickering from one object to another, he internally remains steady in his meditation (as described above in verse nos. 41-43).

[Note—That is, a true ascetic is one who has disassociated himself from his gross body and its organs. What his external body does is of no concern to him. He remains unruffled by its overtures and its waywardness. In other words, he might behave like an ordinary man but internally he is completely at peace with himself and lost in constant meditation and contemplation. His physical eyes might flicker from object to object because it is their natural habit, but he has reined in his internal sight so much that it is fixed on one target that is Brahm or the Absolute Truth; he sees nothing but this 'truth'.]

45. This is an esoteric, an enigmatic and a mystical knowledge (about Brahm). It is superior to any other thing or knowledge. There is nothing better than it; there is no knowledge superior to it (45).

46. One should acquire unadulterated knowledge that is like the rejuvenating elixir called Amrit. With the help of this Gyan or eclectic knowledge and erudition, one can attain eternity because this truthful knowledge would him the correct path, wizen him about what actually consists of the 'truth' instead of getting lost in the maze of 'apparent truths', make him aware of the concept of eternity and imperishability, along with the pitfalls to guard against in his spiritual pursuit. It would teach him to reach the correct goal following the correct path.

This is the greatest secret that must be diligently researched and contemplated upon to arrive at its core essence and unravel its mystery (46).

[Note—The mysterious entity that is the goal of all spiritual endeavours is known as Brahm. The path to this enigmatic Brahm is shown by the Upanishads and explained by the Guru or teacher. The competent teacher is like an expert archer who can shoot the arrow right in the bull's eye. In other words, the competent teacher can lead the spiritual aspirant straight to the spiritual goal without wasting time and energy in a wild goose chase and sort of leading the way by holding the hands of his ward till the destiny is reached. But all this pre-supposes that the teacher must be an expert himself.]

47. This eclectic, enigmatic and mystical knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Brahm should not be divulged even to one's own son or disciple who is incompetent and unsuitable to accept such knowledge (for he would misuse it or wrongly understand it, thereby causing his own ruin as well as that of his forthcoming generations by passing distorted versions of the real thing). It should be imparted to those who are faithful to their Gurus and serve them devotedly. [This does not mean that even though a son or a disciple is incompetent and generally ineligible for imparting such eclectic and secret knowledge is given it just because he has been serving his teacher diligently. But the sincerity of service and the time he spends in close proximity of the teacher would enable the latter to judge his intelligence and general mental caliber along with other

virtues necessary for imparting such divine knowledge. The teacher would have ample opportunity to weigh his character and sincerity and steadfastness of purpose.] (47).

48. This eclectic and divine knowledge should be divulged only to those who are devoted and diligent and sincere, and not to anybody else. If anybody violates this sanction and willfully divulges to unworthy candidates, then such persons would go to hell (i.e. would have to suffer the ill effects of such violations), and would never be able to achieve further success in his own spiritual enhancement (48).

[Note—The restrictions imposed in verse nos. 47-48 are basically intended to guard knowledge from falling into wrong and irresponsible hands because that would be catastrophic for the society at large and for the future of that knowledge itself.]

49. No matter to which section of society or phase of life one belongs, whether he is a Brahmachari (a celibate student or adult), a Grihastha (a householder), a Vaanprastha (a person who has retired from active household life and leads a life of renunciation and usually spends time wandering in pilgrim centers), or a Sanyasi (a friar, mendicant, monk or hermit), no matter where he lives—if a person understands the eternal and irrefutable essence of existence, the absolute and universal ‘truth of the Spirit’ that is one, irrefutable, immutable, eternal, imperishable and non-dual, he is deemed to be knowledgeable, wise and enlightened. Such a person is entitled to be called a ‘Gyani’. [All other sorts of knowledge pertain to the artificial and perishable world and hence are not sustainable and eternal like the knowledge that relates to the ethereal Spirit and the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm at the larger macrocosmic level of existence, or as Atma at the microcosmic level of existence.] (49).

[Note—This is a great observation having a wide ramification. It follows that even a householder who seems to be engrossed in his daily routine can be as erudite and enlightened as a monk who lives a cloistered life in a monastery, or a hermit meditating in the forest, if this householder has understood and realised the truth and the essence of what the scriptures preach. Otherwise, the monk and the hermit are no better than him; rather they may be worse off.]

50. This eclectic and divine knowledge is so potent and effective that even though a man might be indulgent in this material world and engrossed in its enjoyment, he still can hope to find redemption and an auspicious destiny for his soul after his death by following the fundamental tenets of this knowledge and having its holistic awareness. [This is because, as it is mentioned above in verse no. 44, he would remain oblivious of what his body is doing, and on the contrary remain ever submerged in meditation and contemplation internally. It is what is present inside that matters rather than what is on the outside, because the outside is superficial, transient, non-reality and illusionary.] (50).

51. Those who are so highly enlightened, wise, erudite and Brahm-realised that they do not see any difference between the formidable evil consequences of murdering a Brahmin and the astounding boons got by doing the great Aswamedh Yagya (the sacred ritual of the fire sacrifice called the ‘horse sacrifice’), i.e. who treat them alike and remain unmoved and calm under both the circumstances, who neither wail and feel distressed when having to suffer the horrendous pains and torments caused as punishment for murdering a Brahmin, nor do they exult and rejoice in the blessings and good fortunes

bestowed upon them for doing the great horse sacrifice—such excellent persons are deemed to be truly exalted.

They are called ‘Prerak’, i.e. the ones who are truly inspiring and motivating for others; they are called ‘Bodhak’, i.e. the ones who are truly enlightened, knowledgeable, wise, erudite and sagacious themselves and can make others who come in their contact equally so; and they are called ‘Moksha-Daayak’, i.e. the ones who are truly empowered and competent enough to bless others with the boon of finding liberation and deliverance for their souls. [This is because only those who themselves know the subject well can teach others correctly; only who know the path themselves can show it to others. Since such persons are experts in this spiritual field and have a first hand experience and knowledge of it themselves, they are indeed eligible and competent to teach others. It is wise and advisable to shun the others for they are imposters who would do more harm than good.] (51).

52-53. In this world, all true teachers come under these three categories. The ‘Prerak’ are the ones who show others the auspicious and righteous path to be followed; they inspire and motivate and egg-on their followers to follow this path. In fact, their own lives are living examples to be emulated; they show the auspicious way and the eclectic rewards to be had by following this path.

The ‘Bodhak’ makes others aware of the intricacies of the various aspects of this path, guides them and teaches them the smallest issues that are relevant, enlightens them about the real goal of life, and acts as a constant companion and friend to help them in solving all their problems that they might encounter off and on.

The ‘Moksha-Daayak’ is the one who gifts the best and the most excellent gift that can be given to someone, i.e. the gift of ‘Moksha’, the treasure trove of emancipation and salvation, the blessing that enables the disciple to reach the true final goal of life, and it is the breaking of the fetter that shackles him to the endless cycle of birth and death, to liberate him from the fathomless pit of ignorance and delusions in which he is presently trapped. With the knowledge imparted to a spiritual aspirant by a wise, selfless, enlightened and competent teacher, and under his able guidance and inspiration, the disciple is able to attain the aim of freeing himself from the fetters that shackle him to ignorance and its attendant delusions, thereby liberating his soul and delivering him from the torments of bondage and serfdom to the gross body and the world with its horrors and impertinence. Armed with this knowledge, the aspirant is able to attain the supreme bliss and reach the highest stature in life.

Oh Gautam¹! Now you listen about a symbolic way of doing a sacred sacrifice in the context of the body² (52-53).

[Note—¹The word ‘Gautam’ pertains to any enlightened ascetic, sage or seer belonging to the lineage of the exalted legendary sage Gautam. It is like a surname adopted by the followers of sage Gautam.

²The symbolic fire sacrifice where the oblations are offered internally to the deity which in this case is the supreme Brahman residing in the subtle heart of the worshipper as his Atma is elaborately described in Pran Agnihotra Upanishad also. This philosophy does away with the necessity of doing elaborate fire sacrifices in order to attain some spiritual goals such as seeking emancipation and salvation, as well as general welfare.]

54. By doing this symbolic sacrifice in the body itself, one is able to attain an exalted stature that is eternal and truthful, that is imperishable and wholesome. He is successful in observing, in experiencing and witnessing, the presence of that attribute-less and infinite entity resembling a Bindu (a 'dot' or point source) from where the fountain of eternity and bliss springs forth as being located in his own body and no where else in the outside world (54).

[Note—There are a number of Upanishads which deal with Yoga and which show how the ascetic is able to have a first hand experience of Brahm in his own body. This experience translates into extreme state of blissfulness and ecstasy. It leads to the eclectic state of Samadhi, a trance-like state during which the ascetic is unaware of the external world as well as of his own body itself though he apparently remains fully awake, but is actually in a perpetual state of highest elation and ecstasy obtained by being in constant contact with the pure consciousness residing in his own bosom which in turn makes him unbothered about or indifferent to anything else.

The word 'Bindu' means a dot, a point source, a fountainhead, a well-spring. Here it refers to the single-point source from which sprouts the fountain of extreme bliss and ecstasy in the ascetic's own self, and this 'Bindu' is his Atma or pure consciousness which makes him aware of his true conscious 'self'. This Atma is Brahm personified, and this Brahm is a fathomless ocean of beatitude and felicity of stupendous magnitude. So why would he be so stupid as to keep splashing around in the slush of this artificial and deluding world once he has found such a treasury of eternal and truthful bliss, peace, ecstasy and happiness?]

55. The day and the night should be treated as the two 'Ayans' of the year, i.e. as one half of a year, the period of either the summer solstice or the winter solstice respectively. During the course of a period of time consisting of a day and night, one should practice Yoga (meditation, especially Pranayam) consisting of the three steps of Rechak, Purak and Kumbhak for at least one Prahar in each phase. [The word 'Prahar' refers to a period of three hours. Therefore, the total time spent on Pranayam should be three hours in the day time and three hours after sunset, totaling a period of six hours daily. Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 67.]

This would be symbolic of doing Yoga for one fourth period of one's life if the whole year is regarded as a metaphor for one life cycle. In other words, a wise and learned aspirant should spend at least one fourth life on meditation and contemplation to ensure his spiritual welfare (55).

[Note—The terms Rechak, Purak and Kumbhak are collectively called Pranayam exercise of Yoga, and they have been elaborately described in Yoga Upanishads. Briefly they mean as follows—(a) Rechak refers to the exhalation of breath; (b) Purak refers to the inhalation of breath; and (c) Kumbhak refers to keeping the breath trapped inside the body between the other two phases.]

56. [The following verses now describe how to go about it.] To begin with, the aspirant should reverentially pronounce the two Mantras (OM + Hans, or OM + So-a-Ham) and perform the preliminary worship in the prescribed manner. He should reverentially bow and adopt the different Mudras (postures) of Yoga (meditation) to worship and honour the Divinity (represented by these two Mantras) (56).

[Note—Verse nos. 2-8 assert that OM is the Mantra for the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, while verse nos. 16, 20-26, 34, 60-65, 78-79 stress that the Mantra is Hans because it refers to the consciousness residing as the Atma inside the living being.]

57. Oh Son! The Sun God is symbolically worshipped and his blessings invoked by doing the fire sacrifice in the form of repeating the Mantra (So-a-Ham)¹.

True, steady, honest and irrefutable knowledge of the Truth and Reality ensures that the devotee obtains oneness with his chosen deity whom he worships and honours. This form of liberation and deliverance of the soul of the aspirant is called 'Saujya Mukti' whereby it becomes one with the cosmic soul of the creation just like a drop of water is irrevocably merged and inseparably dissolved in a bigger body of water (such as the ocean) when this individual drop of water is dropped into the latter² (57).

[Note—¹When a fire sacrifice is done, each oblation is accompanied by saying a Mantra. This Mantra ought to be specific for the deity who is being worshipped through the fire sacrifice. In the present case, the deity is the Sun God who is a personification of the Supreme Being as it showcases some of the eclectic and divine virtues of the latter—such as its matchless splendour, radiance, glory, life-sustaining qualities, light and creative dynamic energy etc. The Sun is the most powerful and potent visible manifestation of Brahm as compared to other entities that are visible in this world.

The Sun is like the celestial hub around which the wheel of life revolves as is evident from the fact that life would be unsustainable, untenable and unthinkable without the sunlight. This metaphysical fact is symbolically represented by the solar system where all the planets revolve around the Sun. Without the Sun, these planets would sort of lose their foothold in the vast void of the cosmos and would be lost forever.

From the angle of the fire sacrifice, the Sun is like the cosmic cauldron where the Supreme Being performs the sacred fire sacrifice in order to sustain this world. It resembles the fire pit because anything coming near the Sun would turn into ashes in a jiffy, and there is no chance of retrieving it later on.

So when the wise and enlightened aspirant does the internal fire sacrifice with the conviction that each breath is an oblation to the eternal fire of life burning inside his own body as the consciousness and other life factors, then the automatic sound of 'Hans' made by the breath as it comes in and goes out as clearly described earlier in verse no. 16 would be like chanting of formal Mantras during the external forms of the fire sacrifice. Again, since breathing is a constant and unbroken exercise, with this conviction he would be literally doing an eternal fire sacrifice to honour and worship the Supreme Being. That is why internal fire sacrifice is deemed to be much better and spiritually elevating than the external forms of it.

²The *Saujya Mukti* is one when the aspirant seeks to become one with the chosen deity whom he worships. In terms of Upanishads, this oneness means that the individual Atma of the creature would merge with and become one with the supreme transcendental Brahm which is the cosmic Consciousness. From the perspective of Yoga, this would mean that the Pran or vital winds of the practitioner leaves the body and merge with the cosmic wind element present outside the gross body when these vital winds are able to travel up to the Brahm Randhra at the top of the head and exit from there as a result of Pranayam and other Yoga exercises.]

58. There is so much benefit in the practice of Yoga (mediation and contemplation) that the effort made in this direction is very worthwhile. So, one should diligently and constantly practice Yoga with unwavering steadfastness (58).

59. One should constantly do Yoga using the Mantra as prescribed in this Upanishad and thereby remain perpetually engrossed or submerged in a trance-like state obtained as a result of such meditation and contemplation exercise.

The supreme and transcendental form of Divinity (i.e. of Brahm) is obtained by the help of Gyan (true, irrefutable and incisive knowledge of the absolute reality and truth). [That is, Brahm is such an entity that can be known only by deep insight and sharp intelligence, almost like the case where only the brightest students are able to excel in science and engineering streams in college and do high quality research in science.] (59).

60. In the body of all living beings, the imperishable and eternal Divinity is always present in the form of the 'Hans' (i.e. in the form of the divine Swan symbolising the pure consciousness or the Atma or the soul that is present in the creature).

This Hans (i.e. the pure conscious Atma) is the ultimate Truth, and this Hans is an embodiment of divine Shakti (powers, energy, vitality, prowess and strength) that is present in any creature. [In other words, without this Hans or Atma the body would be lifeless and would not show any of the signs of life, vitality, prowess and strengths that it is famous for and known to exhibit. It would be like a lump of dead flesh.] (60).

61. This word 'Hans' is the great saying of the Vedas; it is the maxim and axiom proclaimed by the Vedas; it is the assertion of the Vedas.

This Hans is Rudra (Lord Shiva) personified, and it is the Supreme Being himself (61).

[Note—The word 'Hans' (or "Hansa") refers to the eclectic Mantra 'So-a-Ham, meaning 'I am that essence', or more elaborately 'I, in my truthful form as the pure consciousness known as the Atma, am that essence known as Brahm', or 'I and Brahm are one'. Here the word 'I' refers to the Atma or pure consciousness. The Vedas endeavour to enlighten a person about his true 'self' and remove ignorance from his mental horizon. They preach the Truth of existence, about who the aspirant actually is, what is the true goal of life, how to reach it, how to get rid of miseries and problems of life and find permanent deliverance from them, how to obtain happiness and bliss that is permanent and best etc. When the spiritual aspirant discovers to his astonishment that the exalted stature that is obtainable by doing elaborate fire sacrifices and other religious rituals is easily obtainable by him by turning inwards, by meditation and contemplation that lead to him discovering his own divinity and holiness in the form of the Atma, he exults in joy and spontaneous ecstasy. He would literally dance in joy at having discovered a pitcher of eternal happiness and peace hidden inside his own bosom rather than somewhere outside.]

62-63. Amongst all the Gods, the Hans is the most exalted God called Maheshwar. Right from any point on the earth to the far reaches of the infinite directions, right from the first letter of the Sanskrit language, i.e. the letter 'A' (implying the beginning of creation) and extending to the last letter 'Ksha' (indicating conclusion of the creation, because the word 'Ksha' stands for decay and ruin)—it is the same Hans representing the pure consciousness, the ultimate Truth and the supreme Brahm that pervades throughout the creation represented symbolically by the alphabets of the language.

Nowhere is any Mantra (which is an esoteric and mystical group of letters or words or phrases used to worship or pay tributes to a deity) preached or nowhere does it have any meaning or even an existence if there is no Maatrikaa¹ in it (62-63).

[Note—¹The *Maatrikaa* of a Mantra are the various Sanskrit letters or alphabets that collectively form the text of the Mantra. The word *Maatrikaa* literally means ‘a little mother’. Since the Mantra represents the cosmic divinity known as the supreme transcendental Brahman in its numerous manifestations known as various Gods, the letters are called the *Maatrikaas* because they empower this Mantra with the stupendous mystical powers that this Mantra possesses much like Brahman employing his cosmic dynamic energy to enable him to initiate and then sustain and develop this creation, and even bring about its conclusion.

Brahman initiated this creation with the help of his cosmic dynamic powers and energy represented and encrypted in the Beej Mantra. But as it happened, the unfolded creation had numerous Gods and Goddesses. These Gods actually symbolise the various aspects of Brahman’s cosmic powers and authority, and the Goddesses represent their empowerment and strength to give effect to their mandate. This is a classic case of delegation of authority.

Mere letters and words or phrases of the Mantra would be neutral if not given their powers, or if they are not ‘empowered’ and ‘enabled’ much like Brahman which was a neutral entity until it empowered and armed itself with the cosmic dynamic energy, the necessary strength and authority to enable itself to initiate the process of creation. So, the *Maatrikaa* or Beej Mantras are the empowering aspect of the main body of the Mantra.

Each Mantra has two components—subtle and gross. The subtle part is its ‘Beej Mantra’ which is like the seed from where the huge tree grows. The gross part is the larger and extended part of the Mantra having a number of letters or words or phrases. The Beej Mantra consists of a consonant and the vowel sound attached to it with a dot on top to indicate its point-source of cosmic energy as well as to indicate its anointment as the chief component of the Mantra. The dot is called the *Anuswar*, and it produces the nasal sound in association with the vowel sign preceding it. For example, in the Mantra ‘Hans’ as described in the Brahman Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 62-63, the Beej Mantra is the Sanskrit consonant ‘Ha’ + the vowel sound of the letter ‘A’ with a dot on top—producing the sound equivalent of ‘*hunt + suns or sons*’ = ‘hans’. Since this word ‘Hans’ refers to the cosmic transcendental supreme Brahman and its counterpart as the Atma or pure consciousness present in the body of an individual creature, the letter ‘Ha’ represents Brahman, while the letter ‘Sa’, which is a sibilant sound following the main Beej Mantra, means ‘like that’ or ‘like it’ referring to the Atma because the Atma is ‘like that Brahman’.

The Beej Mantra is like the ‘seed or root’ from which the rest of the Mantra evolves and is said to derive its mystical and stupendous powers and potentials. This Beej Mantra is like the seed having the tree secretly present in it, and the Mantra would then be like the fully grown-up tree. Even when grown, the tree needs the root to anchor it and derive its nourishment from the ground. Hence the two epithets ‘seed’ and ‘root’ used to describe the Beej Mantra. Each deity has a specific Beej Mantra dedicated to it, and one Beej Mantra may apply to more than one deity.

In Hinduism, meditation and contemplation upon a chosen deity is done by the help of a Mantra as a specific formula dedicated to invoke its powers as well as to concentrate the mind and its various faculties on the deity along with aiding the process of meditation and contemplation. This is done by doing Japa which involves repetition of the given Mantra. In fact, Japa is an integral part of any religious exercise, even for success in Yoga because it helps to harness the latent and dormant energy in the body by focusing the mind on the purpose at hand. The Beej Mantra is used for its concentrated energy and strength alongside its ease of use and usefulness in offering oblations or doing Anga Nyas (which is establishing the divine powers of the deity on the different parts of the body to

purify them, empower them and strengthen them with dynamic energy and holiness associated with the Mantra).

In metaphysics, the supreme Brahman is the deity worshipped, and his Mantra is OM which is a monosyllabic word. The Brahman Vidya Upanishad however describes the Mantra as 'Hans' because it refers to the pure consciousness called the Atma as a manifestation of Brahman in the body of the individual creature, and repetition of this Mantra is like establishing a union between the two of them and reminding the spiritual aspirant that his 'true self' is the Atma which is none other than the Supreme Being known as Brahman. That is why there are a number of Yoga Upanishads that extol the virtues of this Hans Mantra during the process of various meditation and contemplation exercises.

The single point source of everything in existence is indisputably Brahman represented by the Beej Mantra. If the letter of the Beej Mantra represents this Brahman, then the dot and the vowel sign of the Beej Mantra are like the dynamic powers, energy and authority of Brahman. The extended part of the Mantra would then be equivalent to the revelation of Brahman in the form of myriad Gods representing one or the other virtues and qualities of Brahman, and their divine counterparts called the various Goddesses would represent the powers and authority vested in these Gods by the supreme Authority so that they can carry out their assigned duties.

In Tantra form of worship, the Supreme Being is worshipped as a divine cosmic Shakti or cosmic Mother which is actually the cosmic powers and dynamic energy of the supreme Brahman that is responsible for the creation coming into being, its development, growth and sustenance, and is even responsible for its conclusion. If the Supreme Being is regarded as the cosmic Male, then the opposite force, the cosmic Female, is envisioned as the Shakti, or the dynamic energy and vital powers, potentials and authority of this Supreme Being. The cosmic Male provided the vital spark of life in the form of the cosmic Consciousness which is like the 'sperm', while the cosmic Shakti is the female counter-part, called the 'Prakriti' which received this 'sperm' and nourished it in its womb to produce the offspring in the form of this vast creation. It was in the Prakriti's womb that the creation was conceived, developed and grew to emerge as the mysterious creation which is as mystical and enigmatic as its father, the Supreme Being. Obviously, the cosmic sperm would have been wasted if it was not accepted by the cosmic Mother known as Prakriti.

In Tantra philosophy, the Supreme Being is known as Mahadeva or Shiva, and the female part or Shakti is known as Uma or Parvati. In the language of the Upanishads or Vedanta, the same Supreme Being is known as the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of the supreme transcendental Brahman from which the entire creation sprouted like the tree from a seed, and the cosmic Shakti is called Maya or Prakriti. The Maya is nothing but the Viraat Purush's dynamic powers that brought about the beginning of creation, sustains it and would finally conclude it; the Prakriti is the womb where the creation conceived and developed. The embryo is the Hiranyagarbha which is the subtle body of Brahman, and this embryo developed and revealed the Viraat Purush.

So, if the given Mantra is regarded as a personification of the given deity, then the Maatrikaa would be its energy and dynamism that is latent and inherent in it. The Mantra would lose its powers and potentials in the absence of the Maatrikaa just like the Supreme Being needed the power of the Shakti to create the world.

The word Maatrikaa literally means a 'little mother'. It is given the same reverence that one would give to a mother because it is the mother that gives shape to the body of the offspring—in this case the main body of the Mantra. Shorn of the Maatrikaa, the Mantra would be meaningless and powerless.

The Beejnighantu text (Beej = seed Mantra; Nighantu = dictionary) written by Bhairav lists 50 such Beej Mantras and describes what they stand for. Another text

known as Beej-vidhaan has 75 lines in the poetical style called the Anushtup Chanda describing the Beej Mantras like Hrim, Strim, Aim, Krim etc. representing different deities such as Aindri, Vaamekshana, Saraswati, Kali etc. respectively. Similarly, the Ekakhar-kosha of Purshottamadeva lists the Beej Mantras of various Gods and Goddesses, such as 'A' for Vasudeo, 'Aa' for Pitaamaha (Brahma the creator of the visible world), 'Pa' for the Wind God called Pawan, 'Saa' for Laxmi the goddess of wealth as well as for Shiva the third God of the Trinity. Another text called Mantraarthaabhidhaan by Varadaatantra also lists the Beej Mantra such as 'Haum' for Shiva, 'Dum' for Goddess Durga, 'Krim' for Goddess Kalikaa, 'Hrim' for Goddess Bhuvaneshwari, 'Klim' for Kaamdeo-cupid, the patron god of love and passion, 'Gam' for Ganesh, 'Kshraum' for Narshingh, the half-lion and half-man incarnation of Vishnu, etc. According to Maatrikaanighantu by Mahidas, the Beej Mantras and even the word Mantras of certain chief deities are as follows—'A' stands for Shrikantha (Shiva, the one with a blue-tinged throat), 'Keshava' for Krishna, 'Vaata' for the Wind God of Pawan, 'Ka' for Maya, 'Ma' stands both for Vaikuntha, the abode for Lord Vishnu who is the second of the Trinity Gods and is responsible for sustenance of creation, as well as for Mahaakaal, one of the names of Shiva, 'Ya' stands for Yamuna etc.

The *Brahm Vidya Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 63 asserts that no Mantra has any value if there is no Maatrikaa in it. To quote—"Nowhere is any Mantra (which is an esoteric and mystical group of letters or words or phrases used to worship or pay tributes to a deity) preached or nowhere does it have any meaning, value or even an existence if there is no Maatrikaa in it (63)."

This Upanishad has elaborately described the 'Hans Mantra' in its various verses, e.g. verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79. In the present case, the Mantra is 'Hans' referring to Brahm in the form of the Atma or pure consciousness present inside the body of the spiritual aspirant.

Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 21-22.]

64. The magnificent splendour and the stupendous glory of this divine Hans (i.e. the pure conscious Atma or the supreme Brahm) are central to all the eclectic virtues and glories that all the honourable Gods in creation possess. This Hans occupies an exalted stature amidst the Gods and is the focal point around which all the Gods of this creation exist¹.

The aspirant should meditate in the Gyan Mudra while remembering Lord Shiva in his 'Dakshin Mukhi' form² (64).

[Note—¹That is, this divine, self-illuminated and glorious entity is seated like an Emperor surrounded by all the Gods as his attendants. This is a figure of speech to emphasise the following points—(a) All the Gods derive their powers and strengths on the authority of the supreme Brahm who is central to their existence. (b) Brahm is at the center of the entire creation much like the hub of a wheel, and all the different Gods and Goddesses represent the different attributes, virtues and qualities of Brahm. They have spread out like the branches of a tree, and if the tree is not there these branches would also not be there. (c) These Gods owe their existence, powers, strength, authority and virtues as well as their importance, value and significance to one single point source called Brahm. They revolve around this central axis just like the planets do around the sun. (d) If Brahm is the seed, the Gods are the huge colourful tree with multifarious shape and size. This is the picture at the macrocosmic level. At the micro level of creation, the creature is a representative of the cosmos, while his Atma which is pure consciousness and his 'true self' is the central point of his existence because without the Atma his existence is not feasible. The various Gods represent the different functions of the body and they therefore reside in the respective organ carrying out those functions. That is why the

Hans—the aphorism for this Atma—is central to the Gods because without the Atma the body and its Gods would be meaningless.

²The *Gyan Mudra* in relation with the word Dakshin Mukhi refers to the sitting posture adopted by Lord Shiva while he meditated facing south. It also might mean ‘with a bowed head’ because the word Dakshin in Sanskrit means downward facing. In ritualistic forms of worship, this direction is the location of Yam God, the god of death whose controller is Shiva. The word Yam also means self control and self restraint. Hence, meditating with total self control and restraint over the restless organs of the body is called Gyan Mudra with a Dakshin Mukhi dimension.

An entire Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition is dedicated to this south-facing form of Shiva, and it is called ‘Dakshin Murti Upanishad’.]

65. The aspirant should remain established in a perpetual state of Samadhi which is a trance-like state of blissfulness and eternal ecstasy. He should remain contemplative and meditative while in this state. This would create an aura of divinity around him which would shine and glow like the light emanating from a piece of crystal (65).

[Note—The enlightened spiritual aspirant is compared to a crystal because he is as pure and untainted as the latter. The crystal has no light of its own but shines due to reflection and refraction of light that falls on its surface. Similarly, the aspirant physical body has no light of its own but it reflects the inner light of holiness and divinity of the Atma that shines through his inner self as well as the light of wisdom, enlightenment and knowledge that he possesses. The divine glow around him indicates the purity of his self and the fact that this purity enables the glow of Brahm to be reflected from him. Since light is reflected in all its purity from a clean surface, and gets faint when reflected from a dirty or tainted surface, the fact that the aspirant is uncorrupt and holy shows in the glow of divinity around him. Again, only a plain mirror without any surface distortions would reflect perfect light, the holy and self-realised aspirant reflects the entire divinity and glory of Brahm without distorting it. In fact, this is the reason why it is said that a self-realised person is Brahm personified because he is a perfect image of what Brahm has been visualised to be.]

66-68. The aspirant should always contemplate upon this divine Hans (Swan) honourably enshrined in the central part of his body, i.e. in his subtle heart.

The meditation that is done using the five principal vital winds such as Pran, Apan, Samaan, Udaan and Vyan, along with their coordination with the five organs of actions of the body (such as hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory) is said to be very effective.

If this coordination between the five organs of action and the vital winds is extended to include the other minor vital winds such as Naag, Kurma, Krikal, Devdutta and Dhananjay, then the results are simply astounding, they are extremely effective.

The Shakti is the center in the body where, as its name suggests, the subtle fire element and the dynamic energy of creation are located. [This ‘Shakti’ is the center of subtle energy in the body, which is the coil like Kundalini located at the base of the spine.] On the other hand, the energy of the Sun is symbolically located in the Naabhi Chakra (which is the subtle energy center located in the region of the navel) (66-68).

69-70. In the beginning, the aspirant should practice the Mudra (meditative posture) called ‘Bandha¹’.

The fire element has three subtle forms and three symbolic locations in the body. Thus, the fire element in the first letter 'A' (of the divine ethereal word OM) has its location in the tip of the nose and in both the eyes. The fire element in the second letter 'U' (of the divine ethereal word OM) has its location in the heart. And finally, the fire element in the third letter 'M' (of the divine ethereal word OM) has its location in the middle of the two eyebrows.

The energy and vitality, the strength and stamina of the Pran Shakti or the vital winds present in the body should be injected in these fire elements. [It is like igniting the latent and dormant fire element that is inherently present inside the body at these three symbolic sites where the fire pit of the sacred fire sacrifice that is being symbolically done by the medium of Yoga as mentioned in verse no. 54 is located by blowing air or vital wind into it.]

The Brahm Granthi (the knot or specific site where Brahm is said to have his seat) is said to be located in the region at the tip of the nose as well as in the eyes. Similarly, the Vishnu Granthi (where Vishnu is said to have his base) is located in the subtle heart² (69-70).

[Note—¹The *Bandha Mudra* pertains to the Baddha Aasan. It is described in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 40. It is literally a closed or tied form of Padmasan when, after sitting in a normal or common form of Padmasan posture, the big toe of the left foot is held by the right hand, and that of the right foot is held by the left hand. [In this posture, the hands are taken behind the back, and the clasping of the toe of the opposite side is done from behind. To felicitate this posture, the spine will have to be curved backwards a bit. The hands and legs are virtually 'bound or tied' to each other. That is why it is called 'Baddha' or tied or closed form of Padmasan.]

The *Benefits of Mudras*—The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 5, verse no. 68 says that the various Mudras of Yoga, in association with the different Bandhas, are able to provide freedom from all sins if practiced mildly, and reward the ascetic with complete liberation and deliverance if done for a prolonged period of time and at a higher level of concentration with due diligence.

²The word Granthi means a node, a nodule or module or knot. It also symbolises the center of power and authority because it is the nodal point from where all the authority needed for governance spread out. It is also like the seat of power and authority of a king, much like the strong fortress from where he rules over the kingdom. The Granthis mentioned in this Upanishad should be seen in this context. They represent the nodal points in the body where the Trinity Gods have their symbolic residence, and it is from here they control the functioning of the body of the individual as well as everything that he thinks and does. If the individual is regarded as the microcosm of the entire creation, then the Atma would be the supreme Brahm, and the various patron deities of the organs would be the different Gods of creation.

Brahm is synonym of Gyan which is knowledge of the truth and possession of the highest degree of erudition, sagacity, enlightenment and wisdom. Since these are the functions of the brain located in the head, the seat of Brahm in the *Brahm Granthi* is said to be here. Knowledge helps to remove the darkness of ignorance, i.e. it is like symbolic opening of the eyes so that the man can see the truth the light of enlightenment and wisdom. Therefore the eyes are also the locations of Brahm Granthi.

In the same vein, Vishnu is the sustainer, protector and nourisher of the world. Compassion, graciousness, love, mercy, benevolence, magnanimity, kindness etc. are some of the eclectic virtues that must be present in a person who is responsible or charged with looking after a huge and extended family which consists of all sorts of

members. Since these virtues are the functions of the heart, Vishnu's seat or *Vishnu Granthi* is located here.]

71-74. The Rudra Granthi (the symbolic site of Lord Shiva) is said to be in the central point or tri-junction of the root of the nose and the eyebrows¹. All these three Granthis (Brahm, Vishnu and Rudra Granthis) are ruptured or broken by the help of the 'Akchar Vayu', the eternal, imperishable, infinitely powerful and invincible wind or air element².

The creator Brahma has his symbolic abode in the letter 'A' of the divine and ethereal word OM. Similarly, the sustainer and protector of creation Vishnu has his symbolic abode in the letter 'U', and the concluder Shiva in the letter 'M'. Beyond them is the supreme Brahm (who is present in the word OM formed by all these individual letters and thus incorporates all of them in his self)³. [Refer verse nos. 4-6 of this Upanishad.]

[Now the Yoga exercise is being described.] The throat should be constricted (i.e. the breath should be stopped), the astounding cosmic dynamic energy that is the progenitor of all other energies and which is located in the Kundalini should be activated, and the tongue should be pressed in the mouth. Then the Naadi (i.e. the tubular duct or the most important nerve in the body passing through the center of the spinal cord) which has sixteen roots branching out from it at its base (like a huge banyan tree), which moves upwards from the lower part of the body (i.e. the base of the spine) to reach the point called the 'Trikoort' (a reference to a mountain with the same name, literally the mount with three summits; here referring to the point in the head where the three primary Naadis, the Pingla, the Ida and the Sushumna, meet), which has three dimensions or forms (as Pingla, Ida and Sushumna), which knows about the location of the Brahm Randhra (the hair-like slit on the top of the skull from where Brahm is said to have entered the body of the man at the time of creation) because it goes up to that point, and which is very fine and subtle, should be activated.

Along with the activation of this Naadi, the trapped energy in the Kundalini should be unlocked and the Prans or vital winds too should be made active. This results in the creation of the right instrument or weapon that symbolically has the same stupendous potentials and astounding strength possessed by the Trident held by Lord Shiva, is as strong, potent and invincible as the Vajra (the weapon of Indra, the king of Gods, with which he controls the world), which has all the glories and potentials inherent in OM (because this word symbolises the four aspects of creation and stands for the four aspects of divinity as mentioned above—i.e. Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and Brahm).

By using this potent and powerful instrument, the ascetic should ease the energy of the Kundalini through the Naadi (Pingla, Ida and Sushumna) and take it up to the Trikoort. [Here, the tri-junction of the base of the nose and the meeting point of the two eyebrows is being referred. This is the area of the cerebrum.]

This method should be used by him to conquer or rupture the 'Sashi Mandal', or the realm of the Moon God. [In other words, he should be able to exercise absolute control over his Mana or mind and heart because the Moon God is the patron god of the Mana in the man.] (71-74).

[Note—¹The word ‘Rudra’ implies anger and wrathfulness. When one becomes angry, the site where *Rudra Granthi* is located becomes furrowed or crooked or cocked as one frowns and cocks his eyebrows in annoyance and anger. Rudra is one of the forms of Lord Shiva’s form which is synonymous with anger.

²This can be imagined in physical terms also. The constant repetition of the Mantra ‘So-a-Ham’ generates high vibrations in the subtle wind element present inside the body so as to activate it. The energy of these vibrations then focuses the activated air during meditation on these knot-like Granthis much like a high velocity jet of gases that are so powerful that they help to lift a heavy rocket from the ground. This jet of vital airs present in the body strikes these Granthis violently, unstucking them from their moorings and cracking them open.

³Refer verse nos. 2-9 above.]

75. The aspirant ascetic should practice the most potent form of breath control exercise called ‘Vajra Pranayam’ (literally meaning the Pranayam which has the potentials and powers that are equivalent in their effect to the invincible and strong weapon of Indra, the king of Gods, called Vajra; hence this form of Pranayam is infallible) by closing all the so-called nine doors¹ of the body (to ensure that the vital winds find no way to escape and can be focused on the activation of the Kundalini and the Sushumna Naadi)². He should have a cheerful mind and sit in a comfortable position. That is, there should be no element of stress and discomfort, as it would cause hindrance in concentration and act as a distraction for the mind and the body. With this preparation, the ascetic should literally ride the Pawan or the wind/air element³ (75).

[Note—¹The symbolic nine doors of the body are the following—two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, and one urethra. Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, 3/18.

²As has been envisioned in the previous verses, there is lot of pressure needed to be built to push the subtle divine energy from the bottom of the spine where the Kundalini is located right up to the top of the head where the Trikoot and Brahm Randhra are located, and more than that is the effort needed to rupture the various knots called the Granthis. If there is any leak in the body, the vital air would not be able to develop sufficient pressure to accomplish this great task. More importantly from the metaphysical point of view, the closing of the nine openings of the body is to emphasise the fact that total self-control is needed if one were to succeed in one’s spiritual efforts. Half hearted and less than complete commitment would be like a leaking balloon.

³In other words, he would feel as light as someone floating in air or riding an air vehicle. The body will feel light and lose its grossness much like a balloon filled with hot air. Since the air inside is trapped because of closure of all exit points, it gets heated up and consequentially become lighter and tends to move up inside the body. This helps to levitate the body.]

76. [This verse outlines the benefits of doing meditation in the way prescribed above.] The aspirant is able to hear the cosmic vibrations known as Naad in the region of his Brahm Randhra, the Shankhini Naadi appears to rain nectar or elixir of bliss and ecstasy called Amrit, and since the subtle lotus of six petals has been slit open, the light of enlightenment that was hidden in it now comes to the fore. [This lotus enclosed the Atma in its petals, and once these petals have been slit open, the inherent enlightenment of the pure consciousness shines in the subtle space of the heart to light up the entire inner self of the ascetic.] (76).

77. The Supreme Being or the great Lord of creation who is established in all the mortal creatures should always be reverentially worshipped and duly honoured. He is present in them as their pure consciousness or Atma, is an embodiment of Gyan or truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment, and is free from any of the ailments or faults or shortcomings¹ that normally afflict every creature in this world in lesser or greater degree (77).

[Note—¹The various Faults that afflict the creature in this world have been classified under different categories, and are variously listed as being broadly of six, five, four, three, two and one types. The terms used to describe the various faults or shortcomings have been described at the end of this listing. Now let us see them one by one.

(a) The *six faults* or shortcomings of the body are the problems associated with this gross world that has a physical origin, takes a birth and ultimately ends or dies. Naturally they are not applicable to the supreme Lord who does not take birth and does not die. These so-called 'Vikars' are the following—(1) problems associated with birth, (2) problems associated with growth, (3) problems associated with consequences of deeds done and actions taken by a creature in this world, (4) problems associated with gradual decay and decline of the body and its functions, (5) problems associated with old age and its attendant horrors, and (6) problems associated with the ultimate destruction and end of everything that relates to the creature. One will observe that the life of a creature is a continuous graph of sorrows, sufferings and pains of one or the other kind. It is only when the creature realises the truth of existence and who he really is that he begins to disassociate himself from the body and the world, and thus is able to break free from this seemingly interminable cycle of horrors. Refer *Mudgal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 6 of Rig Veda tradition as well as *Adhyatma Ramayan* of Veda Vyas, Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse no. 29.

According to the *Varaha Upanishad*, canto 1 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, there are *six Urmis* or faults associated with a creature. They are the following—Ashanaaye (hunger), Pipasa (thirst), Shoka (grief and sorrows), Moha (delusions), Jara (old age) and Mritu (death)—refer also *Mudgal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 7 of Rig Veda tradition.

There also *other six faults* that are considered as *enemies* of a man—Kaam (worldly passions, lust, desires and yearning), Krodh (anger, indignation, spite and wrathfulness), Lobh (greed and rapacity), Moha (ignorance based delusions, worldly infatuations, attractions and attachments), Mada (egoism, arrogance, haughtiness and hypocrisy) and Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice and ill-will)—refer *Mudgal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 4 of Rig Veda tradition.

(b) The *five faults* or shortcomings of the body—According to *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Brahmin 1, section 2, verse nos.1, there are following—viz. (1) Kaam (worldly lust, desires, passions and yearnings), (2) Krodh (anger, indignation, spite, wrathfulness), (3) Asthma or obstruction of breath, (4) Bhaya (fear of physical harm), and (5) Nidra (sleep, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties) (verse no. 1).

How to overcome them—Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/2/2 describes the method to overcome these faults of the body in these words—“These faults which translate into spiritual impediments can respectively be overcome by the following methods—viz. to be without any desires whatsoever, to be forgiving and tolerant, to eat less and moderately, to be strong, brave and courageous, and to constantly devote time and energy in

contemplation and meditating upon the essential and true nature of things, called Tattwa Sevanam (i.e. to keep the mind from lying idle and instead keep it occupied in introspection and engrossed in deep thoughts of what constitutes the reality and truth) (verse no. 2).”

According to *Ram Charit Manas* by Saint Tulsidas, Aranya Kand, Doha 39, Chaupai 2/1, there are *five shortcomings* in a creature and they are the following—Krodh, Kaam, Lobh, Mada, and Maya.

(c) The *four faults* that are associated with a creature’s temperament and natural inclination and mental bearing have been described in detail in *Ram Charit Manas* by Saint Tulsidas, the greatest epic ever penned in the realm of devotional literature which is suffused and soaked in the philosophy of the Upanishads at the same time. This great treatise has the following take on the four faults or shortcomings that afflict all the creatures in this creation—(1) Baal Kand, Doha 285, Chaupai 1/2 states that the four faults are Mada, Moha, Krodh, and Bhram. (2) Doha 43, Chaupai 3/1 says that they are Kaam, Krodh, Mada and Moha. (3) Baal Kand, Doha 112, enumerates them as Shok, Moha, Sandeha, and Bhram. (4) Baal Kand, Doha 128 says that they are Moha, Matsarya, Mada, and Maan. (5) Aranya Kand, Doha 43 lists these four faults as Kaam, Krodh, Lobh and Mada. (6) Aranya Kand Doha 44, Chaupai 2/1 enumerates the four faults as follows--Kaam, Krodh, Mada and Matsarya.

(d) The *three faults* that afflict the creature, according to *Ram Charit Manas* by Saint Tulsidas, Aranya Kand, Doha 38/A, are the following—Kaam, Krodh and Lobh

(e) The *two faults* associated with the creature that prove his great *enemies* are the following according to *Ram Charit Manas* by Saint Tulsidas, Aranya Kand, Doha 43, Chaupai 5/1—Kaam and Krodh.

(f) The greatest fault however is *one*, and it is ‘Moha’ (delusions and its attendant attractions towards this world and its charms, leading to attachments, infatuations and a sense of belonging to it). This Moha is compared to the dark night in *Ram Charit Manas* by Saint Tulsidas, Baal Kand, Doha 116, Chaupai 3/1, and Aranya Kand, Doha 93, Chaupai 1/2. Moha is like a moral disease that afflict all creatures and eat them up like cancer—Uttar Kand, Doha 121, Chaupai 15/1; Moha makes everyone blind—Uttar Kand, Doha 70, Chaupai 4/1.

So, briefly the various ailments that afflict the creature in this world can be summarised as follows—*Kaam* (worldly desires, lust, passions etc. and the attending greed, yearnings and aspirations that they create in their wake); *Krodh* (anger, indignation, wrathfulness and a sense of vengeance when desired results are not obtained and aspirations are not fulfilled); *Lobh* (greed, rapacity and yearnings); *Moha* (delusions that create a sense of attachment, infatuation and belonging with this world and attractions towards the material charm that its sense objects offer, along with their pleasures and comforts); *Matsarya* (envy, jealousy, malice); *Mada* (arrogance, false pride, hypocrisy and haughtiness); *Maan* (self pride and ego); *Maya* (ignorance based delusions, illusions, misconceptions and their attending hallucinations); *Bhram* (confusion and doubts caused by ignorance of the actual truth, which lead to perplexities and vexations); *Shok* (the feeling of regret, contrition, grief, sufferings, torments, miseries and sorrows); *Ashanaaye* (hunger); *Pipasa* (thirst); *Jara* (old age and weakness); *Mritu* (death); *Bhaya* (fear of any kind, such as physical harm); *Nidra* (sleep, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties); *Sandeha* (doubts, skepticism and lack of confidence in some truth such as doubting the authority of the scriptures and their tenets and maxims).]

78-79. All spiritual aspirants who have a gross body (and of course are wise and enlightened) should constantly contemplate upon and visualise the ubiquitous presence of the supreme Lord who is faultless and immaculate, who is all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent in this creation. While doing this, he should constantly repeat the divine eclectic Mantra 'Hans-Hans'. [In other words, the aspirant should constantly remind himself that he is no one else but the supreme Brahm himself personified. This is because another form of the Mantra is 'So-a-Ham', meaning 'that is me'. Refer verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 60-64.]

This type of Japa (repetition of the Mantra) done constantly and involuntarily is called 'A-Japa Japa', i.e. repetition of the Mantra in an involuntarily way and without being consciously aware of it being done at all¹.

This type of Japa involves a coordination of the Pran and Apaana winds. [This is because inhalation of breath during the Purak phase is known as the Pran, while the exhalation done during the Rechak phase is called Apaana.] Since a man breathes roughly twenty one thousands time during the course of a day, this is the number of times this Mantra 'So-a-Ham'² is automatically repeated (78-79).

[Note—¹It is called 'A-Japa Japa' because this repetition is done involuntarily and without any special effort or attention paid to its repetition. The practitioner is not even aware that he is repeating any Mantra because it is directly linked to the normal breathing process which is an involuntary and an automatic biological process done constantly and without break, even while a person sleeps or goes about his daily chores of life—refer verse no. 16 and its note. The prefix 'A' indicates negation, and therefore this repetition of the Mantra Hans is not regarded as doing a Japa in the conventional sense when special attention is focused on repeating any Mantra during some religious ritual or practicing Yoga. It is automatic and involuntary. So when the spiritual aspirant has risen to a level of awareness and enlightenment when he becomes aware of the spiritual importance of each breath that comes in and goes out of his body as representing the two limbs of the Mantra for Brahm, i.e. the letters 'Ha' and 'Sa' or the combined word 'Hans', he is deemed to have become Brahm-realised. Only then can he say that he is repeating the Mantra 'So-a-Ham' meaning 'that Brahm is me as my true self known as the pure consciousness or Atma'.

²The eclectic Mantra 'So-a-Ham' has been described in a number of Upanishads. For instance, Krishna Yajur Veda's Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-133; Shukar Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 20; Sam Veda's Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 83.]

80. The practitioner of Yoga should always meditate upon the symbol of Lord Shiva, called a Lingam, at three places—viz. as a 'Adho-linga' (i.e. as an inverted or downward facing Lingam) in the front of the Kundalini¹, as 'Pashim Linga' (i.e. as a Lingam facing to the west direction, or to the left hand side, or one that is rear-facing) at the place where the subtle filament of light burns in the body (i.e. in the heart region, because it is here the flame of consciousness burns as the Atma), and as the 'Jyoti Linga' (i.e. as a self-illuminated source of light) in the middle point of the eyebrows (which is said to be the site of the third eye of enlightenment and wisdom) (80).

[Note—Refer Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 168; Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11 which describe the presence of the Shiva's Lingam—the symbol representing Lord Shiva—in the body of the man in the course of discussing Yoga.]

[Verse nos. 81-110 are the truthful statements made by a self-realised person who has discovered the great spiritual Truth about himself. It must be noted here that the pronoun 'I' that is constantly used in each verse is not being used for the body but for the Atma or pure consciousness that is the true and real identity of the spiritual aspirant who is making each statement. The observations made in the following verses have an excellent resonance in other great Upanishads belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—such as the Tejo Bindu Upanishad in its full Canto 3 and in Canto 4, verse nos. 1-30, Canto 6, verse nos. 32-39, 58-72, as well as in Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse nos. 16-21. The statements made herein below mark the pinnacle of enlightenment and realisation of the ultimate Truth that inspires the spiritual aspirant to feel so exulted and ecstatic that he is unable to withhold his sense of elation at this discovery, and become so overjoyed with it that he exclaims as follows—]

81. I cannot be demoted or degraded from my exalted stature; I am not fallen and degenerate.

I am beyond comprehension and thoughts (i.e. I am so mysterious, esoteric and enigmatic that I just cannot be fully understood).

I am beyond the limits of logic and rationality (i.e. no one can understand me by applying logics of the material world and try to prove or disapprove my existence in some science laboratory as if I were some material object or some animal species from an alien planet).

I am without a birth (because I am eternal, imperishable and infinite).

I do not have any (spiritual and inherent character) deformities symbolised by such external signs as wounds or tumors (i.e. I am perfectly healthy and without any scars or blemishes in my immaculate character and nature).

I do not have a gross body, and therefore I do not have any organs or any fears that come with the possession of a body (such as from old age, enemies, diseases, pains and other such torments that have a direct relation with the body) (81).

82. I am without words and forms (i.e. I cannot be described in words; I have no physical attributes and features; my true form has no physical dimensions which words can hope to describe or express). Therefore, I am beyond the perception of touch and the sense of feeling (that is associated with anything gross and physical, simply because I have no forms).

I am non-dual, immutable, universal and uniform. [This is one of the reasons why I can't be precisely and correctly described, because each word and each phrase used to describe me would be limiting me, but that would be erroneous as I am limitless and infinite. Each word or phrase has more than one meaning when used in different contexts, whereas I am one whole indivisible single Unit. Further, how can anything that has no form be of two types, or be 'dual'? That is why I am 'non-dual'. Again, Truth is always one and not two, another reason of my being 'non-dual, uniform, universal and immutable'.]

That is also why I am without the gross perceptions of taste and smell. [This is because I have no gross body with the organs that can taste or smell. I am non-dual, so there is no separate thing that has a taste which is tasted by someone else, and neither is there some thing that emanates a smell that can be smelled by someone else.]

I am an embodiment of eternal and primary elixir of creation called Amrit. [This is evident in the fact that after the previous creation came to an end, everything else perished except me. Thus, I must be something on which death has no effect, and such a thing is called Amrit because it is an ambrosia of eternity and imperishability.] (82).

83. I am imperishable and do not decay or come to ruin. I am without a body and its organs. I am therefore not subjected to the decay of the body and the effects of old age. I have no dimensions, forms, shapes, fractions or aspects. [All this is simply because I am formless, eternal, infinite and imperishable as well as universal, uniform, immutable and non-dual.]

I have no Pran (physical life) but still I can speak (i.e. I have manifested myself in the subtle world as the faculty of speech).

I am so mystical, esoteric and enigmatic that I am beyond thoughts and comprehension. [Refer verse no. 86.]

I do not do any deeds (because the deeds are done by the physical body and I am not the body but the subtle, sublime and pure consciousness which is absolutely distinct from the physical gross body) (83).

84. I dwell inside all the creatures and know their inner thoughts and feelings. [That is why I am called 'Antar-yaami', i.e. one who lives inside and knows the inner secrets.]

I cannot be caught hold of or grasped. [That is, neither can I be physically held because I have no gross body, nor can I be understood and grasped by the mind because I am the most mysterious entity in creation.]

I do not need any directions; I do not have any directions. [This is an excellent example of playing around with words. I do not need any directions implies that I know everything and therefore do not need any advice or guidance; it also means that I need not be told where to go or in which direction to proceed simply because I am all-pervading and omnipresent entity. Similarly, I have no limiting body or form which has any sense of physical direction as north or south. Since I am an all-pervading, omnipresent and ubiquitous entity, the concept of having any direction where I am not present does not apply to me. The various directions of the compass have a limited dimension in space and area, a notion that is not applicable to me.]

I have no attributes or defining qualities or characters or features.

I do not have any clan, lineage, caste or creed; (and this is because) I do not have any physical body. Hence, I do not also have the organ of sight called eye, or the organ of speech (called the tongue and mouth) (84).

85. I am invisible (because only gross things can be seen, but I am the invisible ethereal 'spirit'). I have no colours or distinguishing marks that puts me into one or the other classes in the society. I am immutable, indivisible, one and wholesome. I am therefore most strange, mysterious, enigmatic and esoteric, and therefore beyond comprehension and grasp of the mind.

I cannot be heard or seen. I am an entity that is worthy of deep research, pondering and contemplation.

I am eternal and infinite, something that never dies because it is immortal and imperishable (85).

86. I am not the wind or the air element, and neither am I the sky or fire elements. [That is, I should not be judged by weighing me or measuring me against or comparing me with these elements simply because I have a non-gross and subtle body. Though these elements along with others are my manifestations, but it is not the other way round.]

I do not involve myself in promiscuous behaviour (i.e. I do not violate the rules of propriety, probity, righteousness and auspiciousness; I am faithful and steadfast in my beliefs and convictions).

I am unknown and cannot be known in entirety. [Refer verse no. 83.]

I have no birth (because I am eternal and infinite).

I am smaller than the minutest (because I am smaller than the tip of the hair follicle—see verse no. 14), and without any faults or shortcomings of any kind (86).

87. I am free from the effects of the three Gunas called Sata, Raja and Tama¹. I am beyond their reach. I am therefore free from the effects of Maya²; I do not possess the element called Maya (i.e. I am free from the delusory effects caused by these three Gunas as well as by ignorance of the truth).

I am myself experienced and well versed in everything (and therefore cannot be led astray by false charms and enticing allurements proffered by Maya). At the same time, I am an entity that can be experienced (as the ultimate Truth, pure consciousness and infinite bliss that is obtained upon self-realisation).

I am infinite and fathomless.

I am not the material object of the world that can be pursued by the sense organs of the body (87).

[Note—¹The *three Gunas*—The character of all the living beings in the entire creation is dependent upon three primary qualities called the Gunas. They are Sata, Raja and Tama.

(a) The *Sata Guna* is the best of the three qualities present in any creature. It is a positive quality and is marked by a propensity for following the path of nobility, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness, holiness and righteousness. Creatures that have a predominance of Sata Guna are inclined to do selfless service, be benevolent, merciful, kind and gracious, have coolness of head and a rationale and balanced mind, be contented, have humility and piety etc. Such creatures are devoted to good values in life and have a desire to acquire knowledge that would help them reach higher spiritual goals in life.

This Sata Guna is marked by high standards of ethical and moral existence that makes the bearer of such qualities highly respected in society. Such people have a spiritual dimension to their personality. This quality is spiritually uplifting and gives a divine halo to those who possess it and practice it.

The Vasanas that have the Sata Guna or quality dominant in them are like a veil covering the lamp or like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort.

(b) The second quality is the *Raja Guna* and it makes a man more attracted to this material world and its charms, and less spiritually inclined. The Raja Guna is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It makes a creature inclined towards the material things of the gross world and their enjoyments, towards creation of wealth, its enhancement and protection, and generally having a desire for growth, development and expansion etc. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature,

agitated behaviour, ambitions, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, a desire to acquire, retain and develop such acquisitions even to the detriment of one's long term spiritual welfare and even if such actions cause pain to others. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The Vasanas that have the Rajsic Guna or quality dominant in them can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality.

(c) The third quality is called the *Tama Guna* and is the meanest and the basest of the three Gunas. It is a demeaning quality in a creature that leads to his downfall and perpetual entanglement with things that are considered improper and unethical. It creates an inclination for committing all sorts of sins, misdeeds and demeanours. It leads the creature towards negativity and inspires him to acquire negative qualities such as various vices, evils, sins, perversions etc. It makes him inclined to be greedy, rapacious, haughty, arrogant, lustful, intoxicated, vile and wild to the extreme. Such a creature with a predominance of Tama Guna has utter disregard for propriety, noble virtues and ethics, for righteousness and morality.

In brief, it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, and leads to such behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraved, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness. It therefore leads to his downfall, ignominy and ruin as well as ignorance, delusions, gloom, inertia, anger, frustration etc.

The Tamsic Guna or quality is like the embryonic membrane that covers the foetus in the womb. They cannot be removed easily and require great diligence, effort, persistence, dedication and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, and the worst type to possess.

The Vasanas that have the Tama Guna in dominance are regarded as the 'bad Vasanas' or better still the 'worst type of Vasana' that any individual can have.

The varying quantity and intensity of these three in any given individual would decide his specific character and how he is inclined to deal with the world and a given circumstance. The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular nature of an individual, giving him his individuality and his special personality which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process, et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, temperaments, inclinations, behaviour, thinking, outlook, the way they act and do their deeds, the way they tackle the problems of life, the level of their wisdom and intelligence, their personality and their general way of living.

This is also the reason why it is believed that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual and countable specific number of births that the creatures have to take, but only symbolise the huge possibilities of individual characteristics that are determined by the differing ratios of these three Gunas, and the immense number of individuals that exhibit these characteristics in this creation.

The three Gunas that determine the individual character of the creature, that determine his 'individuality' as compared to the general character of the group to which that individual belongs, are like the *isotopes* in chemistry. The isotope refers to the phenomenon wherein one of two or more atoms of the same chemical element that contain the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons in their nuclei and therefore have the same atomic number and chemical properties but different mass

numbers and physical properties. For example, two brothers have the same genes and the same inheritance, but the presence of the three Gunas in different ratios between them changes their personality and thought processes. One may be a highly righteous man while the other might be just the opposite. Their parents are the same, their upbringing is the same, they have attended the same school and ate the same food, but there is a deep chasm when it comes to their character as individuals.

Since each individual is like an independent piece of mosaic that completes the entire picture in conjunction with other such pieces, this individual creature's nature and character helps to determine the overall shape of the creation. These Gunas keep the creation in a state of constant change, because numerous creatures die every moment and new ones are born. The Supreme Being has to be constantly on the alert because of this flux.

The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular 'nature' of an individual giving him his individuality and his special characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body—e.g. two men—might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, behaviour, thinking, outlook, action and deeds, wisdom and way of living. This is what is meant when it said that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual, countable specific number that there are actually and physically 84 Lakh types of bodies of living beings; it only symbolically refers to the huge possibilities that are possible with these three 'Gunas' and their different combinations that can imaginably produce a myriad variety of creation that can be created with these three basic qualities and their various sub classes of qualities.

The proportion of the three Gunas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclination of the creatures. For example, a person with a greater proportion of 'Satvic' (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of 'Rajasic' or 'Tamsic' qualities. So we can say that sages, seers, prophets, scholars and generally enlightened persons have a high degree of 'Satvic' qualities in them; kings and householders who live a noble life are example of those with higher amount of 'Rajasic' quality in them; while sinners, killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats etc. are those people with higher 'Tamsic' quality in them. These Gunas have direct bearing on the personality of a man.

The first quality of Sattva is concerned with creation and enhancement of knowledge and wisdom. For this, one has to remain alert and vigilant like Brahma. The 'Jagrat state' also corresponds to that state when the creature is awake and interacts physically with the external world, imbibes whatever knowledge and information that comes to it, gains experience, and physically reacts to that knowledge and information. Further, such people are regarded as seniors in society, and they are best depicted in the form of the old patriarch Brahma the creator. They remain so engrossed in the world that they forget who they actually are, what their true identity is, and the very basic fact that what they are thinking to be real is actually not.

Next comes the 'Swapna state' in which a man dreams, and it is a metaphor for imagination and visualization of things based on the experience and knowledge gained during the Jagrat state. In this state a man lives and does things in a virtual manner in a virtual world of dreams. He sustains and nourishes his imaginations, fantasies and conceptions in a world of dreams which is far away from the harsh realities of life in the physical world. He suffers and enjoys in his dreams, then when he wakes up, he sometimes forgets what that imaginary world was like, but at other times there have been incidents wherein he has got new insight and new inspiration while he was dreaming. This is how Vishnu sustains and nourishes the creation created by Brahma. For all

practical purposes, a dreaming man appears to be in a state resembling the state of Samadhi, or a state when an aspirant is in deep meditation and engrossed in contemplation, because he remains aloof and oblivious to the external world, and remains absolutely motionless. But this state is temporary, because he would revert back or wake up to the Jagrat state. That is why Lord Vishnu, who represents this quality of Raja, is depicted as perpetually reclining contemplatively on the bed of the coiled legendary serpent floating on the celestial ocean of milk called Kshirsagar. Since without a vision and imagination one cannot grow, develop and rise, Vishnu is regarded as a maverick player of fantastic tricks in order to sustain and enhance his interests of looking after the creation. Out of these Trinity Gods, it is Vishnu who assumes so many forms and adopts so many tricks to do the needful.

The third quality of Tama is represented by Shiva, and that is why he shows certain traits which are so typical of this quality—viz. being short tempered, and destroying at the shortest notice; his external behaviour and attire also represents the excess of this lowest quality in him. The Sushupta state that he represents stands for being totally oblivious of the external world, and remaining in total bliss. This is exactly how Shiva has been depicted—he remains in a perpetual state of meditation, completely indifferent to the external world, unconcerned and detached from the attractions of the enchanting outside when he can find complete bliss inside his own bosom. The Tama quality marks the presence of ignorance in a greater ratio, and this is depicted by Shiva when he remains ignorant of the niceties of worldly behaviour, notwithstanding his exalted stature of being the greatest amongst the Gods.

²Maya—The word Maya briefly means something that is deluding and ensnaring, something that is not the reality but gives an impression that is just the opposite. *Maya* is a word which has two parts, Ma + Ya. The first half means a 'mother; a progenitor; something that creates', while the other half refers to the 'notion of doubt, of either this or that; the notion marked by uncertainty'. The word 'Ma' also means 'to measure, mark off, by any standard; to show, to exhibit, to display; to infer, to conclude; to be formed, built, made of'. Therefore, the composite word Maya refers to a situation which harbours or creates uncertainties, where it is uncertain whether what is said or understood or seen or witnessed or experienced is actually the truth or not. It is virtually the 'mother of all confusions, doubts and perplexities'. It therefore refers to something or some situation which creates or produces perplexities, doubts and confusions, something that is not real; that which is deluding, illusionary, deceptive, mirage-like and deceitful, and is caused by the ignorance about its truth and reality; something that has no substance or pith; displays no certainty and leads to wrong inference. The term Maya is used to define this entire complex phenomenon at once. Hence, Maya is a synonym used for all that is deceptive, faulty, false, deluding, ignorance-based, illusionary, imposturing, deceitful, invisible and super-natural in the sense that it defies all logic and understanding; all that which has no reality or substance in spite of appearing to be for real; all that is hollow and lacks gravity though appearing to be solid and dense. It creates hallucinations in a creature's mind leading him to believe that what he sees is the truth. It is the deluding and magical powers of the supreme transcendental Lord that hides the reality and creates an imaginary world of deceptions and misconceptions.

Maya has three basic constituent qualities. Hence it is called *Trigunmayi*, i.e. one which has the three Gunas or qualities. These three Gunas or qualities are— Sata, Raja and Tama as described above.

The basic idea here is that Maya is like a transparent coloured sheet which covers the supreme 'truth' in the creation. Since it is transparent, it assumes the attributes of the 'truth' that it covers, because for all practical purposes an ordinary man is unable to see that veil because of its transparency. But at the same time, being tinged by different

Gunas, the view of the 'truth' as seen through the veil of Maya gets tainted or distorted consonantly. This is a simple way of understanding what is called 'illusion and Maya vis-à-vis the Truth and Reality'. Maya nevertheless hides the truthfulness of the Truth, and instead lends its own attributes and characteristics to that Truth known as the 'Nirgun Brahm' by the Upanishads when the latter is observed through this veil, while at the same time assuming the glorious attributes of Brahm itself. So ignorant fools think that the Maya is the real thing, whereas they are actually seeing the 'veiled truth' as observed through this covering of Maya, because the actual 'truth' is hidden from view by this transparent sheet which has lend it its own colour and hue to it . As a result, that Nirgun appears to have some attributes, and it thereby becomes 'Sagun', or the one with attributes and characteristics, by the interference of Maya.]

88. I am non-dual, immutable and one. I am complete and wholesome. I have no outside or inside; I am neither outside nor inside. [That is, since I have no physical body, there is no cause for the existence of concepts of outside and inside, as this demarcation can happen only when there is a physical boundary enclosing a particular area of space, such as an empty pitcher or room. Refer verse no. 84.]

I have no ears (because I have no physical body).

I am not even huge and long (because anything that has no physical dimension cannot be measured).

I am un-manifest and without visible characteristics and attributes.

I am free from any disease or faults that ordinarily afflict all the creatures of this creation. [Refer verse no. 81.] (88).

89. I am a non-dual entity that is an embodiment of infinite beatitude and felicity, and of enlightenment, erudition and wisdom.

I am faultless and without any taints or blemishes.

I have no desires and yearnings. I am not engrossed in or entangled with anything; I have no attachments with and attractions towards anything pertaining to this material world.

I am not the doer of anything (because the deeds are done by the body and not by the Atma which happens to be my 'true self and identity').

I am a non-dual entity (that need not do anything because there is nothing besides this entity in this creation) (89).

90. I do not do anything that is done out of ignorance and lack of proper and correct knowledge.

I am not perceived by application of either the Mana (mind) or the Vaani (speech). [That is, I am beyond the reach and grasp of both the Mana as well as the Vaani. I cannot be understood by application of the mind and its various faculties, and I cannot be described and limited by words.]

I have no small fraction; I do not come under the category of things that are small or limited in scope, or that can be measured by a scale that is applicable to worldly things (for I am vast, fathomless and measureless; I am infinite and endless)¹.

I am free from all grief, sorrows, miseries and agonies of all kinds.

I have no alternatives and no parallels.

I do not have to subscribe to any specific way of life revolving around or recognised by some special type of fire². [In other words, the eclectic and divine entity that is being referred to in these verses does not come under the purview of any of these fires and their related things. It need not conform to any particular way of life revolving around a specific type of fire, or observe a set of sacrosanct rules or perform any of the rituals involving a specific type of fire to be regarded as holy, righteous, divine and auspicious. Even without subscribing to any particular type of divine fire, it is nevertheless holy, divine, pure, auspicious and righteous.] (90).

[Note--¹This is easy to understand—we do not measure the distances of far away stars and galaxies in meters or centimeters. They are measured in light years—the distance traveled by light in one year which is a standard measure for astronomical distances. Likewise, we cannot weigh the planets in grams or kilograms. In other words, the supreme transcendental entity that is the subject matter of these verses as well as the Upanishads in general cannot be measured by a measuring tape with a mundane worldly perspective, for it is super-human, outwardly and transcendental.

²There are five special types of *fires* which are related to five types of circumstances or events in the life of a man. They have been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 4, section 10 to 13. They are—(a) 'Garhyapatya' (the fire of the household hearth), (b) 'Dakshinagni' (the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity), (c) 'Ahawaniya' (the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice), (d) 'Sabhya' (the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit) and (e) 'Awasathya' (the fire of the later Smriti period). Worship of the three important fires have been described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 2, section 24, while canto 5, sections 4-10, 19-24 explain their great symbolic metaphysical significance.

The Garhyapatya fire—This is the householder's fire. A householder has land and farm representing 'earth' in which he grows food. This food is grown with the help of the light of the Sun, and it is cooked in the fire of the fire place in the house. Hence, the Garhyapatya fire, or the householder's fire, is intrinsically present and is implied in these 4 entities. It is an integral part of these four. The earth has the 'fire element' because without heat and warmth, no seed would germinate and no life can survive on this earth. The food has fire present inherently in it because it is the energy inherent in food which helps to energise the creature that eats it. The presence of heat in the sun does not need to be explained because it is very evident.

The Dakshinagni fire—is a witness to making of charities when some water is poured as libation to the Gods. It signifies that the Gods are offered water to drink. To give water to the thirsty is the greatest form of charity. Therefore, this fire is symbolically present in water, and when it is poured, it signifies that the heat produced by sins committed by the person has been doused. Charities and donations make a man famous and renowned, hence the allusion to directions of the earth. His glory shines like the bright moon and he is called a star among human beings. He is the most exalted amongst his peers and compatriots even as the moon is most prominent amongst the stars in the sky.

The Ahawaniya fire—is lit to invoke Gods, and the Gods live in the heaven; hence the reference to the sky, heavens and electric. Since Pran is the best form of the vital winds, the allusion means that the Gods are the most exalted forms that exist in creation. The 'electric' is a metaphor for immense strength, potent and power, which of course the fire possesses. This inherent quality of Electric that it possess most stupendous powers and strength is likened to the presence of Brahm in it even as the great power and strength present in a man is due to the Atma or Pran present in him. Even as a man is useless without the presence of Pran in him, the Electric would lose its importance if there was no Brahm present in it which gives it its punch and strength.

The following are also regarded as the five fires—(i) The Sun, (ii) The Lightning, (iii) The Terrestrial fire, (iv) The Master or Lord of the household, and (v) The Chief Priest.

According to Garbho-panishad, paragraph 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the body of the living organism is called 'Deha' or body because it harbours the Fire element in it.]

91. I do not have a beginning, middle or end. I am like the sky (i.e. endless, fathomless, measureless and infinite). [Refer verse no. 98.]

I am the pure conscious Atma. I am that eternal, cosmic and all-pervading Consciousness which is a measureless treasure of beatitude and felicity. [Refer verse no. 92.] (91).

92. I am an embodiment of Anand (bliss and joyous abundance). I am like Amrit (the elixir of life that provides both eternity and bliss). [Refer verse no. 91.]

I am established in my Atma. I am an entity that is the inner-self of all living beings as their conscious Atma (soul).

I am 'Atma-Kaam', i.e. I am fully contented with my Atma and my self. I am like the supreme Atma (the cosmic Consciousness or the supreme Brahm) that is like the sky (i.e. I am as vast, infinite, eternal, measureless, fathomless and featureless as the sky) (92).

93. I am Ishaan (Lord Shiva, the emblem and insignia of divinity and holiness). I am worthy of worship and reverence. I am the best and the most exalted Purush (i.e. I am the Viraat Purush—the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm from whom the rest of creation evolved—personified). I am, therefore, the best, immaculate and the most exalted entity in creation.

I am merely a witness to whatever that is happening in this world (because I am not involved in this world, I am neutral, and I am not a doer of anything, so I simply watch everything like a dispassionate observer who is not at all concerned about the consequences of the happenings).

I am beyond everything and every considerations; I am transcendental and even beyond its definitions (93).

94. I am the only one of my own kind; I have no parallel.

I am a 'Kavi', i.e. I am an expert in words and expressions; I am well lettered and well read.

I am the Lord who presides over all deeds and judges them (because I am the Supreme Being personified).

I am the cause of all causes (i.e. I am the one who is behind everything that has a cause, and I am the seed that is at the root of all causes giving rise to myriad happenings in this world).

I am the implied secret meaning behind everything mysterious, enigmatic, esoteric and mystical (in the sphere of mysticism, theology, metaphysics and spiritualism). Indeed, I am secret and keep myself secret.

I am the hidden eye which empowers the visible organ of the eye to see things. [In other words, I am the subtle power and authority that actually 'sees' things, and use the

external organ of the eye as merely an instrument to aid me in seeing them. This is because I wish to remain secret and behind the curtain. I am the subtle faculty of seeing that resides in the eyes and empowers them to carry out the function of 'seeing'.] (94).

95. I am eternally blissful and happy.

I am the one who infuses life and consciousness to all others. [In other words, I am the Atma which injects consciousness and life in the gross body of all the living beings. Without me, they would all be dead and lifeless.]

I am a treasure and fountain of enlightenment and knowledge, of wisdom and erudition. [Refer verse no. 93.]

I am not only illuminated but am an embodiment or a fount of the best form of illumination in existence (95).

96. In the dark, I am like a secret witness to everything. [In other words, no one should think that if he does anything in the dark or in secret, if he acts surreptitiously and deceitfully, he can hoodwink me who am the consciousness and the Atma. That is why it is said that the Lord watches every deed of the man, whether done overtly or covertly.]

I am the basic essence of the word Turya, i.e. I transcend all planes of existence and am beyond all definitions. [The 'Turya' is the fourth state of transcendental existence when the ascetic goes beyond all awareness of the existence of the world.]

I am beyond the reach of darkness. [That is, darkness in any form can have no effect on me, it cannot touch me, and it cannot cast its gloomy shadow upon me. 'Darkness' is connected to anything that has a negative connotation, such as ignorance, delusions, falsehoods, illusions, deceit, conceit, etc. It is negativity in all its dimensions. Thus, this stanza means that the divine entity being referred to here is not at all affected by any of the things that come within the definition of Darkness. The untold reason behind it is that I am eternally 'self-illuminated', and where there is light there can be no darkness of any kind, physical or otherwise. Refer last stanza of verse no. 95.]

I am a glorious living embodiment of Divinity and Godliness. I am farsighted and can be 'seen', or witnessed and experienced by those who have farsightedness. [That is, the pure conscious Atma is not perceivable by all and sundry. Every Tom, Dick and Harry cannot know it or see it. It requires a lot of deep insight and erudition, a lot of patience and self-control, a lot of diligence and sincerity to even have a glimpse of one corner of this divine and esoteric Godhead. After all, the words 'supreme and transcendental and beyond comprehension' etc. cannot refer to the mundane, the known and the routine.]

I am that eternal and steady Truth that is at the foundation of sight, that gives meaning and substance to what is being seen, that proves that what is seen is actually the reality and the truth, that it cannot be false because it is actually 'seen' first hand. [In other words, one can see things that have an existence, and not things that have no existence. The latter would come under the category of 'imagination of the deluded and hallucinating mind'. The mirage seen in the hot desert comes under this latter category. Even the world of material sense objects that are perishable come under this class. But there is another dimension to this world which is not so easily seen but is nevertheless the 'real and truthful thing', and it is this entity that is being referred here. It is the ultimate 'Truth' called the Consciousness without which nothing would be seen in the first place,

whether real or unreal. This concealed entity is the truth in the form of consciousness that forms the foundation upon which the activity called 'seeing' and the faculty of sight are rested. The proof of this lies in the fact that a man from whose body consciousness or Pran has left, i.e. a dead man, never sees anything inspite of the fact that the eye is still there in the body as much as is the brain in the skull of the same body. These two entities that had been seeing everything clearly a while ago become unable to do so now because the consciousness or Atma, also called by its synonym the Pran, has left the body. So we deduce that the function of seeing was not done by either the eye or the brain but by something else. And this 'something else' is the 'consciousness' (Atma) that injects and activates the factor of 'life' (Pran) into these and other organs of the body.] (96).

97. I am eternal and omnipresent; I am present in every moment of life. I am innocent, guiltless, taintless and faultless.

I do not do anything; I am a non-doer of deeds (because all the deeds are done by the body and not by the pure consciousness).

I am without any blemishes and dark taint of any kind; I am flawless.

I am pure and immaculate. I have no alternatives and no parallels. [Refer verse no. 98.]

I have no family and lineage from which I could draw my name, fame and renown, my mystical powers, authority and divinity. [The word 'Nirakhyaat' means name, fame, renown, a description of some royal family, family lineage, or legion of saints. In other words, I have no parent from whom I could have my birth and from whom I could derive or inherit my fame and powers. I do not depend upon anyone else's legacy. What I am is my own being, have my own unique character and virtues, and I do not depend upon someone else to acquire some kind of greatness and divinity, some kind of mystical powers and authority. My divinity, holiness and godliness etc. are a part of my inborn and inherent attributes, virtues and abilities.]

I am steady and unwavering; I do not fluctuate; I do not undergo any change (like the waxing and waning phases of the moon) (97).

98. I am without any faults and taints of any kind (refer verse no. 97). I am eternally and infinitely pure, uncorrupt and immaculate. I have no definable and delineable attributes and qualifications. I am detached with and non-involved in everything.

I have no gross organs of the body (because I am formless and an ethereal spirit). [Refer verse no. 91.]

I am the ultimate controller and regulator of everything. I am neutral and dispassionate.

I have no Kalaas (i.e. I have no fractions or characters that can be definitely be delineated, defined and understood; I am one single non-dual entity that has no fractions and separate aspects) (98).

99. I am the supreme Purush (i.e. I am a personification of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic revelation of the supreme Brahm, and from whom all the other Gods as well as the rest of creation came into being, and who has revealed himself in the image of the man). Hence, I am the most ancient and traditional supreme transcendental Parmatma

(i.e. I am the Supreme Being himself who is the most ancient in the sense that he existed even before the creation came into being).

I am a fathomless and infinite ocean (treasure) of knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment (Paraavar). I am wise and enlightened enough to crush all delusions and deceit that might be created out of falsehoods and ignorance (99).

100. I am the best Amrit (the eternal elixir of life and wisdom; the ambrosia of eternity and bliss that is drunk by the Gods) and the most ancient and complete supreme Lord. [That is, I represent that elixir which gives eternal life and beatitude because I am the Supreme Being, the undisputable Lord of creation himself personified.]

I am a personification of wholesome and complete bliss and happiness (because I am Amrit personified). I am an embodiment of that knowledge and enlightenment which is one and non-dual, which has no two meanings or aspects (that can cause any kind of confusions or vexations as to which one of them is the 'truth').

I am the evident truth in the form of the consciousness that resides inside the inner self of all living beings. I have only one subtle and sublime form that never changes, and that has only one divine contour (as the 'consciousness'). All of them are nothing but me (100).

101. I am an expert who has specialized knowledge, erudition and wisdom (Pragyaataa).

I am very calm, tranquil and peaceful.

I am the splendorous and self-illuminated entity known as the Parmeshwar (the supreme Ishwar, the Lord God) who is like the sky (i.e. is fathomless, infinite, endless, imperishable, attributeless, without any qualifications, all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-incorporating etc.). [In other words, I glow with a divine light emanating from my being which has given the rest of the world its light. Of course it is the 'consciousness' which lights up the world and makes it alive for the creature to enjoy it. Who would have liked to live in a dark and gloomy world with fearful ghosts and hobgoblins for company?]

Beyond the definitions and debates of what constitutes Dvaitya (dual concept of creation) and what is Advaitya (non-duality), I am neutral and the only entity that is worthy of research, contemplation, meditation and deep ponderings. [Obviously, when one comes in contact with such a mysterious entity that cannot be defined and which does not come under any known classifications or categories, an intelligent and inquisitive mind with an adventurous spirit would not leave it alone but delve deeper and deeper until one is able to unravel its secrets. In the realm of metaphysics and spiritualism, such researchers with adventurous spirits were ancient sages and seers who did not flow with the tide but dared to go against its overwhelming push to unravel the greatest secrets of creation. This discovery they revealed to others in the form of their teachings enshrined in the Upanishads.] (101).

102. I am intelligent and intelligence personified. I am the Lord who takes care of, sustains and protects all the mortal creatures called Bhuts—i.e. I am 'Bhutpaal'.

I am the 'Bhagvan'¹ who is not only enlightened and splendorous but also an embodiment of the virtues metaphorically represented by 'light' with its brilliance, radiance, dazzle and splendour. [That is, as a divine entity that has all the positive,

glorious and divine virtues which are collectively symbolised or represented by the single umbrella-like all-inclusive word 'light', as opposed to 'darkness' which would signify negativity, dearth and all lowly qualities, I glow with its divine halo which radiate out from me to light up the surrounding world and remove the darkness that is so foreboding and fearsome. Had it not been for me, the world would have been plunged into the nether world of destruction and decay. That is why I am called 'Bhutpaal', or the one who takes care of all the living beings by the virtue of my divine powers of knowledge, wisdom and erudition alongside astoundingly virtuous qualities such as compassion, benevolence, magnanimity, kindness, mercy, equanimity and graciousness.]

I am called Mahadev—i.e. the great Lord precisely for the aforesaid reasons.

I am great and majestic (because I not only possess astounding virtues but also put it to good use by benevolently taking care of this creation and its creatures).

I am the one who is also known as 'Maha-Gyea', i.e. one who is most knowledgeable, most omniscient, most wise, most erudite and most enlightened.

I am indeed the Maheshwar, i.e. the great Ishwar, the great Lord. [Incidentally, Lord Shiva is also known by this name of Maheshwar. The reason is that amongst the pantheon of Gods he is said to be most enlightened, a completely detached and self-realised Godhead, and a renunciate ascetic who remains perpetually in the state of meditation and contemplation in the remote snow covered mountains, away from the entrapments of the material world and its accompanying spiritual upheavals, perplexities and dilemmas.] (102).

[Note—¹The word 'Bhagwan' refers to an enlightened being who possesses certain divine qualities not possessed by ordinary human beings, and which are even difficult for the Gods to have. The word has two parts—'Bhag' and 'Wan'. The 2nd part 'wan' means 'one who possesses', while the 1st part 'Bhag' means 'one who is like the receptacle or womb' that harbours the following six qualities or virtues—(1) to have 'Aishwarya', which means to possess all the virtues that come under the category of having majesty, powers, wealth, fortune, opulence, flourish, supremacy, sway, dominance, glory, grandeur, omnipotence and other divine faculties in existence (सम्पूर्ण ऐश्वर्य); (2) to have all Dharma, which means to possess all virtues that come under the ambit of righteousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness, and nobility of thought and conduct (सम्पूर्ण धर्म); (3) to possess all the glories and majesties that come under the definition of the word Yash, i.e. to have great fame, glory, majesty and renown (सम्पूर्ण यश); (4) to have Sree, i.e. to possess all wealth, prosperity, pomp and circumstance, to have prestige, dignity, respect, honour, splendour and glory, as well as all other factors associated with those qualities mentioned in serial no. 1-3 above (सम्पूर्ण श्री); (5) to have complete and comprehensive Gyan, i.e. to have true, deep, incisive, complete and all-incorporating knowledge, erudition, wisdom, skills, expertise and enlightenment (सम्पूर्ण ज्ञान); and (6) at the same time to have immaculate and the highest degree of Vairagya, i.e. to have complete renunciation, detachment, indifference and dispassion towards everything in this world (सम्पूर्ण वैराग्य). Hence, anyone who is endowed with the above six divine, eclectic and exemplary qualities, is called a Bhagwan.]

103. I am free from all encumbrances. I am 'Vibho'¹.

I am worthy to be invited, welcomed and accepted (i.e. I am an honourable, dignified and divine entity that all wise men should invoke, welcome, accept and show respect to; I am worthy of spiritual pursuit).

I am all-pervading and all-encompassing, being omnipresent, all-inclusive and ubiquitous.

I am the best form of the cosmic element called 'Vaishwanar'².

I am Lord Vasudeo³ (one of the names of Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation, signifying his lordship over all the essential elements in Nature, called the Vasus of which there are eight in number, created to help sustain the forthcoming creation).

I am the cosmic eye of the whole world (Vishwa Chakshu) by which it sees everything. [This refers to the consciousness that uniformly resides in the bosom of all living creatures. It is this consciousness that injects life and awareness in their gross body. Without consciousness, the body would not be able to 'see' any thing. The word 'see' is a symbolic way of saying that the body lives and becomes aware of the existence of this world and its myriad creatures due to the presence of this single factor called consciousness or Atma inside it, because only a living body 'sees' and not a dead body. The word 'see' also means that the conscious factor present inside the body always warns the creatures and endeavours to show the right path to the creature and prevents him from going wayward. This is called the 'inner voice of the conscious' which tells one not to follow the unrighteous and inauspicious path. Refer last stanza of verse no. 94.] (103).

[Note--¹The word *Vibho* means 'one who is omniscient, omnipresent, all-pervading, magnanimous, eternal, almighty, omnipotent, majestic and powerful Lord of all'.

It is an epithet usually used to describe the virtues of Lord Vishnu who is regarded as being synonymous with both Brahm, the attributeless and infinite Supreme Being who had manifested as Narayan, as well as the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of this creation. He is also called the 'Chief Purush', the virtual commander-in-chief of this creation or the President of the institution known as creation. Whether a male or a female occupies these high seats of power, the terms commander-in-chief and president are applicable to them both.

(ii) 'Vibho' refers to Brahm while the word 'Purush' refers to Lord Vishnu in the form of Viraat Purush. It is due to the joint efforts of Brahm and the Viraat Purush that this creation has come into being.

(iii) The meaning of the word *Vibho* depends upon the context in which it is used. For example, in Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 68, and Canto 7, verse no. 36 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, it is the Atma that is called the *Vibho* for it possesses and exhibits all the glorious virtues of Brahm. Earlier, verse no. 67 of this Canto calls the Atma as a manifestation of Vasudeo, one of the names of Vishnu. When these two verses are read together, the inference becomes obvious—that is, the word is applicable to any entity that exhibits the divine and glorious virtues that characterize the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being and Lord of creation. Here, both the Atma as well as Vishnu are honoured by the title of *Vibhu*.

²The *Vaishwanar*—the word *Vaishwanar* has many connotations as follows — (i) It is the fire used in sacrificial rituals. (ii) The microcosmic pure consciousness that resides inside the body of the creature, providing it with life, vitality and energy which helps it to digest food. (iii) Vedanta says that it is the pure consciousness that is a fraction of the Supreme Consciousness, and it resides in the body of the creature even as the Supreme Consciousness resides in the macrocosmic vast body of Nature or creation. It is representative of the supreme, transcendental entity that is the Lord and the primary cause

and the governing authority of the whole creation. (iv) Since the creatures have myriad forms, it has as many forms as the creatures themselves, incorporating all of them in it. Hence, it is also called 'Viraat Purush' (which means the vast, colossus, all incorporating, all-pervading, almighty form of the microcosmic Atma of the creature as well as the macrocosmic Atma of the creation; it is measureless, infinite and eternal). This is the subtle form of 'Vaishwanar'. (v) The gross manifestations of this 'Vaishwanar' is the 'Annamaya Kosh' or the food sheath which is one of the five sheaths enclosing the Atma of the creature. This is because, as the Vaishwanar Agni (fire), it helps in digestion of food. (vi) Its state of existence is defined as the 'waking state of consciousness'. (vii) The word also means —relating to or belonging to all men, omnipresent, known and worshipped everywhere, universal, general, common, complete, immutable, full in number, a collective noun for all the Gods, one who is all commanding and almighty.

(b) The *Vaishwanar Fire (Agni)*—The legendary 'fire element' has a very prominent place in the scriptures. The Fire God or *Agni* appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/1; 1/12; 4/5; 5/1; 6/7-9; 7/1, 3-6; 12-13; 8/1, 23, 39; 10/1-7; 12/1-122 etc.; in Sam Veda—1-51; 53-55 etc.; in Yajur Veda—1/5; 2/4; 7/24; 18/72 etc.; and in Atharva Veda—6/119; 8/3; 12/3.

Since it was the first born amongst the various Gods, it was called 'Agni' meaning the one who comes first, that which precedes others. It is the inherent 'fire' element present in all the living creatures that distinguish them from non-living creatures. It is all-pervading and omnipresent, and infuses life to all the creatures (Kaushitaki Brahmin, 4/3; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 9, verse no.1). This fire helps in digestion of food (Shatpath Brahmin, 148/10/1).

He is the foremost amongst the Gods worshipped on earth (Shatpath Brahmin, 6/1/11). He is compared to the Sun in the heavens. He has 7 tongues representing the 7 colours of the rays of the Sun or the colours of light (Rig Veda, 1/146/1; 3/6/2). Since he provides nourishment to the Gods by accepting the offerings made to the sacrificial fire at the time of fire sacrifices, he is deemed to be their sustainer and father (Rig Veda, 1/69/1). Other names of the Fire God called Agni or Agne are the following—Vishwavedus, Kavi, Kavikratu, Jaatvedus, Vaishwaanar, Tanunpat, Matrishwa and Naraashansa. It is believed that he was born from the mouth of the Virrat Purush (Rig Veda 10/90/13).

According to some texts, the fire element has *three* legendary forms—viz. the 'Agni', which is the terrestrial fire on earth represented by the word Bhu, the 'Jatvedas', which is the fire of the sky represented by the word Bhuvaha, and 'Vaishwanar', which is the fire of the heavens represented by the word Swaha (Brihaddevatakaar, 1/67). The term appears in the Rig Veda approx. sixty times and is more often than not synonymous with both life as well as the fire element.

³Vasudeo—These *Vasus* are the various patron Gods who preside over the essentials of life; they are eight in number—Vishnu is the sustainer, Shiva who is the annihilator, Kuber who is the treasurer of the wealth of the Gods, the Sun, Water, Fire, Wealth represented by gems and gold, and 'Ray' representing glory and fame. The element 'Fire' is the most potent, prominent and essential force in creation, because without fire the world would freeze to death. Hence, the Fire-God is said to be the chief amongst the Vasus. The 'fire' element is the active force in creation and is primarily responsible for kindling the cosmic cauldron that set in motion the process, and once having set it in motion it then sustained it and would finally annihilate it by burning it to cinders. On the other hand, Lord Vishnu is the passive force of creation represented by his other form of Viraat Purush which is the primary male aspect of creation. Lord Vishnu, who is the sustainer of the creation, is the Lord of Laxmi who is the Goddess of wealth, and is the supreme creator because Brahma, the old patriarch of creation who created the visible

world and its creatures, was himself born atop the divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu utilizes the services of Laxmi who is the personification of the active forces of creation to create, sustain and annihilate the world. The Vasus are symbolic Gods who represent those essentials aspects of creation without which life would be difficult to conceive and sustain and finally conclude.

The eight Vasus are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are— (i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun God (who provides energy and food) and his rays and radiance (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), (iii) Shiva (the concluder or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water God (called Varun), (vi) the Fire God (called Agni), (vii) any body of water such as a pond, a river etc., and (viii) holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation). According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/3, the Vasus are the following—Fire, Earth, Air, Antariksha (the space of the solar system), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heavens), the Moon, and the Nakshatras (the stars and the planets).

According to Purans, the eight Vasus are the following—Dhruv, Dhar, Som (the sap of an elixir-providing plant called Som which is used during religious ceremonies as sanctified liquid offered to the Gods), Aapha (water), Anil (wind), Anal (fire), Pratush and Prabhas.

These eight Vasus are the semi-Gods who symbolise the various types of assets needed to sustain this world. They therefore represent such assets as jewels, precious stones and gems, gold and other forms of wealth and property. Vasus also refers to the fire and water elements as well as their grosser forms as the terrestrial fire and water bodies such as ponds and lakes; to the virtue of radiance, splendour and glory; to the ray of light; to Kuber (the treasurer of Gods), Shiva, Sun, Vishnu, and a simple and pious gentleman.]

104. I measure more than the dimension of the cosmos or universe; I mean more than what is conventionally and traditionally meant and understood by the word cosmos or the universe. My definition and existence is much far ahead and beyond of what is known as the cosmos or universe. I do not come within their conventional and traditional meaning. I cannot be implied to mean anything coming within the ambit of the known and the unknown cosmos.

I am more huge, more vast and more colossus than the entire Vishwa (cosmos, universe, world at a macrocosmic level). [And that is why I am called the 'Viraat Purush'.] As such, I am the macrocosmic Lord Vishnu who is the creator and controller of the entire cosmos (creation). [This refers to the Viraat Purush who is the macrocosmic gross body of the invisible supreme Brahm from whom even the creator of the visible creation, i.e. Brahma the patriarch, was created. This Viraat Purush when he decided to initiate creation assumed the role of Vishnu, and then from his navel emerged the old patriarch of visible creation, i.e. Brahma. The two, Viraat and Vishnu, are interchangeably used. The word 'Viraat' literally means vast and colossus, something that has an infinite dimension and implication. Refer verse no. 99.]

I am pure, uncorrupt and immaculate (Shuddha).

I am the auspicious and the life-infusing cosmic sperm that has injected life in the otherwise life and inane cosmos. This cosmic sperm represents the grand and glorious virtues of life such as vitality, vigour, stamina and strength which mark this vibrant and

colourful creation. This I do in my role of Vishnu, the creator and nourisher of the creation.

I am an embodiment of the virtues of peace, tranquility, serenity and calmness.

I am eternal, uniform and infinite. I am Shiva (i.e. I am auspicious, righteous, truthful, beautiful, realised, enlightened and renunciate) (104).

105. I am the Atma that resides in the inner self of all the mortal living beings called Bhuts. I am eternal and omnipresent, being ubiquitous and ever present everywhere at all times. I am traditional, primeval, ancient and primary.

I remain firmly and majestically established, and shine in my own divine glories (105).

106. I reside in the bosom (the inner self) of all the living beings as a fount of light representing their Atma (pure consciousness), and as such I am their Lord. [This is the microcosmic view of the Atma because it pertains to an individual creature.]

All the mortal creatures that have life have their existence in me. [This is the macrocosmic view of the Atma. This statement conforms to the concept of Vedanta that everything in existence is a tiny fraction of the vast cosmos which consists of the body of the supreme Brahm in his manifestation of Viraat Purush much like the individual hair follicles on the body of a man in relation with his entire body.] This is because I am ubiquitous, all-pervading and omnipresent in all spheres of time and eras (106).

107. I am a witness to all; I am a witness for all (refer verse no. 103). I am the Atma which universally lives in all the living beings (as their soul and pure consciousness).

I (pure consciousness) am the mystical entity that is the secret behind all life forms in this mortal world (because without me nothing would live and feel anything).

I bring out and highlight the individuality and the glorious potentials of all the organs of the body (because it is due to my presence in the body that these individual organs perform their designated tasks which are so magnificent and astonishing). But at the same time, I am absolutely separate and distinct from them; I do not have any organ of my own (because I am the ethereal and eternally free Spirit and disembodied cosmic Consciousness which do not have any grossness in them and neither do they need any gross organ to showcase their stupendity and astounding divine glories). [Refer verse no. 98.] (107).

108. I transcend the three states of existence of a creature. [These three states are the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleeping state of existence of consciousness, i.e. I am in the fourth state called the Turiya state which is a state of complete bliss and ecstasy.]

I am gracious, kind, benevolent, munificent and magnanimous towards all.

I am the supreme Parmatma, the Supreme Being and the cosmic Soul of the creation who is eternally and truthfully blissful, joyous and happy (refer verse no. 99, 102). I am dear to all and all are dear to me (108).

109. I am nothing but Anand (bliss, happiness and joy) in its true, undiluted and eternal form (refer verse no. 92, 94, 100).

I am self-illuminated and a treasury as well as a fount of pure consciousness (refer verse no. 99).

I am an embodiment of truth; I am indeed truthful (refer verse no. 96). I possess mystical powers, and therefore I am called a 'Siddha'.

I am the Atma or soul of all (living beings). [Refer verse no. 106.] (109).

110. I am like a base and foundation for all living beings (because no one can live without the Atma or consciousness and Pran or the vital spark of life in him).

I am an embodiment of that truth that is established in all of them (as their Atma).

I can cut through all fetters (of ignorance and delusions that have tied the creature to this world of falsehood and illusions) and unshackle all the creatures to provide them with liberation and deliverance (because I am enlightened and wise, I am knowledge and erudition personified, and therefore eminently qualified to do so).

I can devour all that have come into existence (because I am the end of creation and have revealed myself as Lord Shiva, the God of conclusion).

I see and observe all (as I am the supreme Lord of creation and nothing is unknown to me or hidden from me because I am omniscient and all-knowing, I am omnipresent and all-pervading, and therefore nothing happens without my presence and knowledge). [Refer verse no. 84.]

I am the one who experiences everything on behalf of all the creatures (as their conscious Atma or self).

A person who is aware of these facts about me and my truthful nature and form (i.e. about the pure consciousness Atma or soul) is the one who truly a wise Purush (a wise and enlightened man). This is the teaching of this Upanishad (110).

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(IV—C) Yog Kundali Upanishad

The Yog Kundali Upanishad/Yogkundalyu-panishad, as the name suggests, is dedicated exclusively to Yoga—its exercises, its practice, its pitfalls and precautions, its spiritual benefits, and how it can lead to one's liberation and deliverance from this trap-like perishable body as well as from the cycle of birth and death. It has three Cantos. It is one of the main Yoga Upanishads and come under the category of the revealed ones— as it was revealed by the patron God of Yoga himself, i.e. by Lord Shiva, to the creator Brahma (refer Canto 3, verse no. 1). It was also preached by Shiva to sage Gautam (Canto 1, verse no. 3). It has three Cantos.

Canto 1 deals with the concept of breath control, called Pranayam, and explains its various forms along with the Aasans and Bandhas that aid in activating the spiraled subtle energy center in the body, called the Kundalini, that had hitherto been lying dormant in the body in order to harness its latent spiritual energy. Amongst the interesting things narrated here are the four types of Pranayams (viz. Surya Bhedan, Ujjaayi, Shitali and Bhastrika), the three types of Bandhas (Mool, Uddiyan and Jalandhar), and the detailed process of kindling the dormant Kundalini fire.

Canto 2 elaborately describes a special meditative technique called ‘Khechhari’ which bestows mystical powers upon its practitioner. It empowers him with certain unique abilities such as the ability to float or fly in the air.

Canto 3 describes the successful culmination of Yoga and its spiritual rewards—viz. self-realisation and Brahm-realisation, the submergence of the self in the supreme Self, the enlightenment about the pure consciousness known as the Atma, and the resultant eclectic and spiritually exalted state of having achieved Mukti—liberation and deliverance—from this body as well as the world.

Canto 1

1. The reason why the mind is so undecided, restless, fickle and unsteady that it cannot remain concentrated on anything for long and continues to jump from one object to another, remaining always in a state of flux, are two—viz. (a) *Vasanas* (natural, inherent and inborn passions, desires, yearnings and lust pertaining to the gross organs of the body and the gross sense objects of the material world which a creature carries down to this present life as a baggage from his past life) and (b) *Samir* (the wind or air element, here referring to the vital winds called *Pran* that keep the body active and restless much like the air inside the balloon; when the body is restless the mind too would be restless because the mind is directly affected by the body and its sense organs).

If a person is able to control anyone one of them, the other is automatically controlled (1).

[Note—The various *Vasanas* in a person, i.e. the inherent desires and wishes, the latent passions and hidden yearnings that he has vis-à-vis the material world and its sense objects, inspire and propel him to do things in this world that would satisfy them. They manifest themselves as his *Vrittis* or natural urges, inclinations, tendencies and temperaments. For instance, if a man wishes to become a literary scholar and acquire name and wealth on this account in this life but fails to do so due to some reason, this unrequited desire would not die with the death of the body but would be carried over to the man’s next life as his unfulfilled desire. This would create in him an overriding desire for knowledge in the new life that he has got as a result of so many other factors. So he would have the necessary inborn aptitude, natural intelligence and mental skills along with the urge and drive for knowledge that his sibling would probably lack though both have the same biological parents. This explains why two brothers or sisters vary so dramatically in their nature and habits as well as in their mental and intellectual development, and why a child often shows traits quite the opposite of the ones present in its either parents. The secret lies in the fact that the child’s ‘true self’ is the Atma which had acquired this new body due to the cumulative effects of so many factors related to its past life, such as the deeds done by the individual in its past life and their cumulative consequences, the unfulfilled desires and aspirations that he had, his earlier *Vasanas* (worldly passions, desires, yearnings etc.) and the resultant *Vrittis* (inclinations, habits, tendencies) that he has carried over to this new life, and so on and so forth.

Since the body is only a medium for the Atma to carry out its desires, and the body is able to perform any task only as long as the vital winds present in it allow it to function and carry out its designated duties, it follows that as long as there are *Vasanas*, the *Samir*

(i.e. the vital winds or Pran present in the body) is forced to remain active so as to enable the creature to fulfill these Vasanas with the help of the body. Since the Samir is responsible for keeping the body active so that the individual can interact with the world to satisfy his list of Vasanas, it follows that the former cannot rest as long as the creature has Vasanas in him.

Interacting with the material world of astounding charms and fascinating sense objects create a new set of Vasanas for them. This is in addition to the baggage of desires and yearnings carried over from past life. Involvement with this world and attachment with the body in the erroneous belief that the world is the real thing, that it is meant to be enjoyed and lived to the full, and that the body is a person's true self and identity, creates a new wave of Vasanas. Constant interaction with the world makes the creature aware of newer opportunities and attractions of the material world, and this stokes the fire of Vasanas.

The natural corollary is that if the Vasanas are controlled, there would be no need for the body to remain active and be an active participant in the affairs of the mundane world of material sense objects that are by nature entrapping and creators of numerous problems for the creature. This translates into the Samir being put under control.

Again, since interaction with the world of stupendous material charms and full of sense objects that has a natural tendency to attract the individual towards themselves, an active Samir results in creation of fresh Vasanas.

In other words, Vasanas and Samir are inter-related; they work in close coordination. As such, if one is vanquished, if one of them is controlled, the other would naturally submit its self. For instance, if a man has no desire for gratifying his sense organs, he would pay scant attention for the charms of the material sense objects of the world, and this lack of interest or Vasanas would calm his restlessness which is indicative of the calming of the Pran or Samir.

Keeping a safe distance from the pleasures of the sense objects and the comforts offered by the material things of the world would help eliminate a burning desire to acquire them, and then worry about their retention and enhancement. Since acquisition of material things of the world and satisfying the urges of the sense organs of the body needs deeds to be done and actions to be taken, once a man overcomes his Vasanas he automatically gives his body rest, which translates into the Samir become calmed and quietened. If the Samir is calmed down and willfully controlled, the body would be calmed down and lose its natural habit to be restive, which would mean that it would no longer be obsessive about the thoughts of the world which gratifies its sense organs, and would instead accept whatever comes its way with a great degree of equanimity and dispassion. It would no longer yearn for sense gratifications and attempt to indulge in the enjoyment of the material comforts and pleasures of the world which however is intrinsically deluding and entrapping. Thus, the individual is able to avoid creation of new Vasanas.]

2. Out of the two, it is better and easier to first conquer and control the Samir (vital winds called Pran that reside inside the body of the creature). [This is because once the Pran is controlled, once the body stops its natural restlessness and its organs stop their outwardly run in pursuance of the objects of the material world that lure them constantly with their irresistible charm, it would be very easy to overcome the Vasanas—the inherent desires for acquiring and enjoying the enticingly charming sense objects of the world, the various aspirations and yearnings for worldly fame and wealth, the natural tendency to appease the organs and gratify their carnal urges etc.]

There are three methods for obtaining control over the Pran, i.e. doing Pranayam or breath control exercises of Yoga successfully—(a) Mitaahaar (control over what is eaten by eating moderately and correctly), (b) Aasan (various sitting postures of Yoga), and (c) Shakti Chaalan (activating the subtle energy centers in the body, such as the activation of the Kundalini, and making them upwardly mobile along with the vital winds of the body, especially the Apan wind) (2).

3-4. Oh Gautam (name of a sage belonging to the lineage of the enlightened sage Gautam)! Listen, now I shall tell you about the first method—viz. being vigilant about what is eaten, along with the proper method of eating that is conducive to one's all round welfare. [That is, food plays a very important role in success of Yoga. The stress is on regulated diet—both in its quality and its quantity, as well as the proper way of eating food that is conducive to all round health—both physical and spiritual.]

A wise spiritual seeker and a practitioner of Yoga should eat soothing food that is non-irritating, non-stimulating and has a calming and relaxing effect on the body, invigorating it and helping it to remain healthy and agile. Such foods include eatables that are sweet and lubricating. He should not eat more than a half of the capacity of his stomach. [That is, he should not eat more than absolutely necessary, and definitely avoid overeating or indulgence in food. The food should fill only half of the stomach, and the next quarter is to be filled with water, while the last quarter is to be left empty.]

This is the correct and proper way to eat which would be good for the spiritual aspirant. In fact, this is regarded as the food eaten on behalf of Shiva or an offering to Shiva¹.

Now I shall tell you how to conquer the Pran. For this, there are two main Aasans—viz. Padmasan (lotus posture) and Vajrasan (the strong and invincible posture which is as inviolable and potent as Vajra, the strong and invincible weapon used by Indra, the king of Gods) (3-4).

[Note--¹This is because Shiva resides in the body of the creature as his truthful Atma, the pure consciousness called the 'self' of the individual creature. The food eaten is regarded as an offering to this resident deity just like offerings are made to the patron deity by putting them in the fire pit during the formal fire sacrifices. The food eaten by the aspirant is similar to this formal offering because just like the fire of the sacrifice that burns the offered food and reduces it to ashes, the food eaten by the aspirant is also burnt or digested in his stomach and its energy extracted to nourish the resident Atma. The food eaten helps the 'self' to maintain a healthy life and gives one the necessary energy, strength and stamina to remain active and productive in life. Medically also it is an established fact that over-indulgence in food is very injurious for health. It not only shortens one's life but also makes the body riddled with numerous problems besides creating drowsiness, lack of attention and lethargy. Eating slowly helps each morsel of the food eaten to be properly chewed and mixed with digestive juices in tongue before it reaches the stomach. This not only gives a sense of satisfaction from the food eaten but puts so much the lesser load on the digestive organs. Eating fast and in a hurried fashion is never medically advisable.

If we draw a parallel from the way offerings are made during the formal fire sacrifice we would note that each offering is followed by a pause when Mantras are pronounced before the next offering is made to the fire pit. This gives the fire sufficient time to burn the previous offering before accepting the next round. From practical point of view, this helps the fire to remain kindled with sufficient vigour and heat to devour the whole lot of

offerings, for had the latter been dumped in to the fire pit in large quantities then either the fire would have been pre-maturely doused or the major quantity of the offerings would have remained un-burnt. The pause for Mantras is devised to ensure that neither of these happens. The same logic applies to the food eaten by a man. If the food is eaten slowly, one not only enjoys it to a greater extent but it also prevents over-straining the digestive organs which would become weak if the practice of eating fast and in large gulps becomes a routing affair. Another benefit of slow eating is that a lesser amount of food is fulfilling; it prevents over-eating.

The food eaten is to be regarded as an offering to the resident deity inside the body, which is the Atma representing the cosmic Shiva principle, and therefore should be given the same respect and sanctity as shown for the offerings to Gods during a fire sacrifice. This great importance and superior value of this symbolic 'internal fire sacrifice' that is done by making offerings to the Divinity residing in one's own self as the pure consciousness or Atma has been espoused and explained elsewhere in other Upanishads also, viz. (i) Avadhut Upanishad, verse no. 7; and (ii) Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse nos. 21-22.

The eclectic spiritual view that Lord Shiva lives in the body of the spiritual aspirant has been described in detail in the Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which has a number of verses dedicated to this symbolic worship of Lord Shiva in the form of the Lingam—viz. Canto 1, verse nos. 72, 167-168; Canto 2, verse nos. 6, 8-14, 20; Canto 3, verse nos. 1-15; Canto 5, verse nos. 2-5, 5-16 (as abode of Shakti); Canto 6, verse no. 33; and the Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 80 which describes the Shiva Lingam symbolically present in the body. The Yogshikha Upanishad describes the human body as a holy city or pilgrim site where the Atma is the Lord, or where Lords Vishnu and Shiva have their abodes along with their respective divine consorts Laxmi and Shakti. The relevant parts are Canto 1, verse nos. 165-168, and Canto 5, verse nos. 2-5. This Upanishad, in its Canto 1, verse 72 describes the body as the palace where the Lord known as the Atma resides.]

5. The Padmasan is basically to sit in an erect position, cross-legged, so that the sole of one foot rests, facing upwards, on the thigh of the opposite leg. This posture of meditation helps one to overcome all sins and their evil effects (5).

6. The Vajrasan is to sit in a posture such that the body is ram-rod straight, i.e. the neck, the head and the spine are in a straight line. Then the left leg is bent inwards at the knee joint and turned backwards so that the heels press against the 'Mool Kandha' (the genitals). The right leg is similarly bent in and its heels placed above the heel of the left leg (6).

[Note—This Aasan is usually used done with a slight variation—instead of putting the right heel on top of the left heel which together press the genitals, they are placed side by side below the genitals. This is a far more convenient posture than the one describes above. Everything depends upon the ability of the practitioner. This is also the sign of Siddhasan.

Refer Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 84 also in this context.]

7. The main center of the cosmic dynamic energy in the body is known as the Kundalini¹. A wise and expert practitioner stirs it and activates it, thereby unleashing its hitherto dormant energy and easing it up (by means of various Yoga exercises) so that it

risers from its location at the lower end of the body to reach the high point in the body located between the two eyebrows. [This is the location of the so-called ‘third eye of wisdom and enlightenment’ because once this subtle energy reaches this point, the aspirant begins to experience the ecstasy obtained by spiritual awakening and coming closer to the cosmic vibrations called Naad that constantly resonates in his mind and entire being but was hitherto not discerned by him due to lack of proper tuning of his mental faculties. This area of the body is called the ‘Agya Chakra’ and corresponds to the cerebrum of the brain.]

This is called ‘Shakti Chaalan’—or activating and moving the subtle cosmic energy that is hitherto present in a latent and dormant mode inside the body of the aspirant (7).

[Note—¹The *Kundalini* is located at the base of the spine and is so-called because it is in a spiral form. This coil-like center of subtle cosmic energy normally lies in a dormant state. By doing Yogic practices, the stupendous energy trapped in its coils can be released by the unplugging of its mouth which opens into the ‘Sushumna’ nerve. This energy then rises up the spinal cord and ultimately reaches the top of the head. The Yogi who practices this Kundalini activation, called ‘Kundalini Jagran’, experiences brilliance and dazzle unmatched by any other experience. Since it requires a lot of willful effort and energy to make this happen, and an activated Kundalini helps the spiritual aspirant achieve success in his meditation and contemplation on the one hand and providing sufficient energy to his Pran or vital life forces present inside the body to enable the pure consciousness known as the Atma to experience extreme bliss and ecstasy that comes with ‘self-realisation’, the process is called ‘Shakti Chaalan’—or activation of the hidden energy of the body for the aspirant’s spiritual upliftment.

The process of activating the Kundalini has been elaborately described in the book ‘The Serpent Power’ by Arthur Avalon & Sir John Woodroffe.

The Upanishads that deal with Kundalini and its activation are the following—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 7-8, 43-46, 65-74, 76, 82-84; Dhyanbindu Upanishad, verse no. 66-69; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 82-139; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 81-84. (b) Sam Veda’s Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 36-39.]

8. There are two main ways to activate the Kundalini—(a) Saraswati Chaalan (by using the power of knowledge and expertise to accomplish the task of activating the Kundalini, because ‘Saraswati’ is the patron goddess of knowledge), and (b) Pran-rodh (meaning control of the vital winds called Pran that are present inside the body by doing Pranayam and other Yoga methods).

By practicing Pran-rodh (Pranayam), the coiled Kundalini is straightened out (i.e. it becomes uncoiled, or loses its rigidity and stubbornness, thereby releasing its trapped dynamic cosmic energy that was hitherto present in a subtle form and was lying dormant and untapped) (8).

9. [Verse nos. 9-18 describe what is known as ‘Saraswati Chaalan’ in Yoga parlance.]

Let me first tell you about Saraswati Chaalan¹. Ancient scholars used to call this Saraswati as ‘Arundhati’² (9).

[Note—¹The Yoshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 23 says that the *Saraswati* Naadi rises from the Naadi Chakra located in the lower part of the body and goes up to the

tongue, thereby controlling the function of speech. That is why it is designated as 'Saraswati', as this Goddess presides over this function.

Basically, the Saraswati Chaalan involves doing Pranayam or breath control exercises, the two Aasans called Padmasan and Vajra Aasan, and uncoiling of the Kundalini and enabling its subtle energy to enter the Sushumna Naadi with the aid of the Saraswati Naadi and the vital winds called Pran located in the lower parts of the body.

The word 'Saraswati' refers to knowledge, erudition, wisdom and sagacity along with their relevant skills and expertise. This verse implies that a person who has embarked on a spiritual journey and plans to do Yoga to realise the ultimate Truth of existence and become enlightened about himself should first become well conversant with the theoretical aspect of the metaphysical knowledge pertaining to this field. He should be fully acquainted with all the pros and cons of Yoga, all its intricacies and complexities, before actually practicing it. Half-baked information and knowledge, or misconceptions and confusions of any kind, no matter how small and insignificant, would be more dangerous for him than not stepping on this path at all. This is because Yoga is a highly technical field which requires great expertise, resilience and patience. A wise man is one who gathers all background information and prepares himself well in advance before actually embarking on an adventurous journey to the unknown and un-chartered territory. He moves slowly and cautiously, testing his ground, his preparedness and his aptitude. If he lacks any virtues, he should first inculcate them, and practice hard and with sincerity. Yoga is not a summer holiday camp!

The Saraswati Chaalan can be translated as 'activating the power of wisdom, knowledge, erudition and information as a precursor to attaining success in Yoga, or any endeavour for that matter, and a launch pad for the spiritual journey of the aspirant that enables him to attain a state of self-realisation when he can experience the presence of cosmic energy and consciousness within his own self, realise his true potentials, and become truly enlightened'. It involves getting fully acquainted with all the different steps of Yoga, such as the crucial 'Pran-Rodh' or control of the vital winds mentioned in verse no. 8 above. Since no success is possible in any field with the backing of knowledge that is technically correct, updated, precise and practical, the importance of invoking Saraswati, the patron Goddess of these eclectic qualities and intellectual assets, is too evident to be emphasised or highlighted. It enlightens the aspirant about the pitfalls, how to overcome them and what precautions are necessary to pre-empt them, what are the landmarks on this journey and how one judges one's success, which is the correct path to follow and how to walk on this path, what is the truthful goal and how best to realise it, and so on and so forth. Thus, Saraswati Chaalan basically prepares the spiritual aspirant for the arduous journey ahead. See note to verse no. 17 of this Canto 1 also.

This philosophy of the Saraswati Chaalan also requires the spiritual aspirant to exercise the greatest of restraint over what he speaks because Saraswati is the patron Goddess of this faculty, and second, it envisions the activating of one's dormant subtle spiritual energy and harnessing it for obtaining bliss and ecstasy of conscious awareness of the pure 'self' made possible by following the disciplined system of Yoga.

²*Arundhati* was the most erudite, sagacious and wise wife of sage Vashistha, the moral preceptor, guide and teacher for the line of kings of Ayodhya in which Lord Vishnu manifested himself as the famous incarnated divinity known as Lord Ram around whom the well known epic Ramayan is built. She was the daughter of Prajapati Kardama and his wife Devahuti. Sage Atri's wife Anusuiya was her sister, and sage Kapil was her brother. Her famous son was sage Shakti. She was a preacher and a well known scholar of the scriptures in her own right, and was no less enlightened than her husband Vashistha.

Her glory and virtues have been immortalized by believing that one of the distant stars is her manifestation, and this star is named after her as 'Arundhati Nakshatra'. It is the star called Alcor belonging to the Great Bear group. It is a very dim star and rarely visible, but its importance lies in the fact that all newly wed Hindu couples are obliged to view it as it is considered auspicious and a bestower of good fortunes to them. Since it is poorly visible to the uninitiated, the couple's priest gradually guides them to it by first pointing to the brighter stars nearby and then gradually guiding them to this star. This process is called 'Arundhati Darshan Nyaaya'. It has great symbolic value—because it implies going from the gross to the subtle, from something that is very evident and appears to be the real thing but isn't to something that is not so evident but is indeed the real thing, from the known to the unknown. In philosophy it implies arriving at a definite conclusion and reaching one's sought-after goal by using logic, intelligent deductions and analysis of all available information.

Ancient scholars honoured Arundhati and acknowledged her superiority in wisdom, knowledge and erudition by calling her Saraswati, the patron Goddess of wisdom, erudition, speech and knowledge. In other words, she was a living image of all the virtues that this Goddess Saraswati was famous for; she personified Saraswati.]

10. At the time when one breathes through the Ida Naadi (i.e. the left nostril) during the course of Pranayam, one should steadily sit in the meditation posture called Pranayam (verse no. 5). By doing this practice diligently, the Kundalini would be activated by itself in a natural way (10).

[Note—The Yogshikha Upanishad, describes the process of Pranayam in stepwise detail wherein the breath is passed through one nostril at a time.

The word *Naadi* literally refers to a tubular duct present inside the body through which all the vital forces of life travel from one point to another and keep the body alive, active and healthy. It is through the Naadi that the vital winds known as Pran flow; it is through them that blood flows; it is through them that senses travel from the sense organs of the body to the brain and from the brain to all the corners of the body; it is through the Naadis that various juices and fluids of the body are secreted and made to reach their targeted areas. Even if one Naadi is damaged, the body suffers.

But in the context of the Kundalini activation, the word Naadi refers to the central nervous system passing through the spinal cord.]

11. Then that Naadi (here referring to the area of the Kundalini in the body which is the waist area and the base of the spinal column from where this Ida Naadi originates) should be wrapped by a length of cloth that is twelve fingers-width long and four fingers-width broad (11).

[Note—The Gheranda Shahita and the Hath Yoga Pradipika (3/113) also mention this wrapping. While the Gheranda Sanhita prescribes that this cloth should be white and soft, and then the rest of the body should be smeared with ash of the fire pit, the Hath Yoga Pradipika says that this cloth is not a physical wrapping of cloth but implies that this area where the Kundalini is located, i.e. the Mool Kanda area, is approximately of this size and is naturally covered or wrapped around by the sky element.]

12. The thumb and the fore-finger should be used first to firmly clasp both the nostrils and shut them tightly. Then the practitioner of Pranayam should do Rechak and Purak (exhalation and inhalation respectively) alternately through them as convenient to him¹ (12).

[Note--¹That is, first one nostril is used to exhale by closing the other, then the process is repeated through the second nostril. The entire process of Pranayam consisting of three stages—viz. Rechak or exhalation, Purak or inhalation, and Kumbhak or retaining the breath inside the body for a given time—is described elsewhere in other Yoga Upanishads as well, such as the following—(i) Shukla Yajur Veda = Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/53, 2/92-120. (ii) Sam Veda = The entire Canto 5-6 of Jabal Darshan Upanishad; Yoga Chudamani. (iii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Brahm Vidya, verse nos. 21-22, 66-76, Dhyani Bindu, Yoga Tattva, Yogshikha and the present Yoga Kundali Upanishad.

The Patron Gods of Pranayam have been enumerated in Dhyani Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 21 which says that the three phases of Pranayam have three patron Gods. That is, the Purak phase (in which breath is inhaled) has Brahma the creator as the patron God; the Kumbhak phase (in which breath is held inside the body) has Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation as the patron God; and the Rechak phase (in which the breath is exhaled) the patron God is Shiva or Rudra.

The benefits of Pranayam have been enumerated in Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 91-99, as well as in Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 44-46, 53-55.]

13. This Ida Naadi ought to be kept activated—i.e. the process of breathing through the left nostril by closing the right nostril should be done for a period of two Murhuts¹. At the same time, attempt is to be made to simultaneously pull up the Sushumna Naadi a bit from the Kundalini² (13).

[Note—¹*Murhut*—This is a time measurement and applied for a short period of time. It is approximately a period of time equivalent to 48 minutes, or 1/30th part of the day consisting of 24 hours. Therefore, the day has 15 Murhuts and the night also has 15 Murhuts.

²That is, a conscious effort is made to exert a pull on the Sushumna Naadi so that the trapped energy of the Kundalini is sucked upwards. This Sushumna Naadi is the duct or nerve that passes through the center of the spinal cord from its lower end right up to the head.]

14. With this method, the Kundalini is activated and its energy sneaks into the Sushumna Naadi through its lower opening and begins to gradually move upwards. Simultaneously, the various vital winds called Pran present in the various parts of the body begin to enter the Sushumna as soon as its lower end is opened by the activating of the Kundalini (14).

[Note—The Kundalini keeps the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi blocked. When the former is heated by doing Pranayam and other Yoga Aasans and Bandhas, it opens this mouth. The trapped vital winds inside the body which cannot escape, because all escape routes have been closed by means of the various Bandhas, Aasans and Pranayam, now enter this only opening left for them—i.e. they enter the Sushumna Naadi. This is the central nerve passing through the spinal column.]

15. By exerting upward pull and creating sufficient pressure on the vital winds by constricting the throat and pulling in the muscles of the abdomen, these vital winds are constrained to move upwards towards the chest and even reach higher in a gradual manner. This is the effect of the Saraswati Chalan process—i.e. it is the combined effect of Pranayam whereby exhalation through the Ida Naadi or the left nostril creates a natural upward pull on the Pran¹ along with the simultaneous and conscious pulling up of the vital winds from the lower part of the body through the channel of the Kundalini and Sushumna Naadi (15).

[Note—¹This phenomenon is commonly observed even in day-to-day life. The chimney above the fire-place in the house expels hot air and creates a suction action which generates convection currents in the air. As a result, hot air of the fire-place which is lighter rises up through the chimney and cool air from the outside is sucked into the house through the various openings such as windows, doors and ventilators. The same phenomenon applies here as well. When breath is expelled through the nostril, it creates a vacuum inside the body, and since other openings such as the anus and mouth are closed, the vital winds trapped inside the body and heated due to this incarceration are then sucked up. Since the only opening open to them is the Kundalini and the lower end of the spinal cord represented by the Sushumna Naadi, these winds force themselves into these channels and make their way upwards. Their movement upwards is felicitated also by the fact that they are heated, as hot air is lighter and has a natural propensity to move upwards.]

16. When this is accomplished, the Pran or vital winds can be made to rise up higher still from the region of the chest by doing Rechak or exhalation through the Surya Naadi (i.e. the right nostril—by closing the left nostril during this stage) simultaneously with constricting of the throat muscles (16).

[Note—When verse nos. 15 and 16 are read together, we determine two distinct phases here. The first phase is narrated in verse no. 15 when the Pran (the vital winds) is pulled up from the lower end of the abdomen up to the region of the chest by using the Ida Naadi. The second phase involves lifting or pulling up of the Pran still higher up from this region to enable it to reach the upper part of the body, i.e. the region of the throat and the forehead.]

17. That is why a person (who is desirous of activating the Kundalini and harnessing its latent cosmic energy for the purpose of obtaining the ‘high’ of conscious awakening) should practice this process of invoking the blessing of the patron goddess of speech and sound, i.e. Saraswati, for the fulfillment of one’s desires¹.

An aspirant who does this successfully is able to free himself from all sorts of diseases. [That is, the exercise of Pranayam gives him good health, and not only spiritual bliss.] (17).

[Note--¹Since the process of Pranayam involves the control of the passage of breath through the nostrils from where the basic nasal sounds are produced which are not only symbolic of the presence of life and awareness in the body but also form the basic vowel sounds of the Sanskrit language. Besides this, throat and chest muscles are also constricted during Pranayam so as to prevent the escape of the Pran through the mouth and generating sufficient pressure so that the breath can cause the vocal cords to vibrate and create sound—refer verse no. 49 of this Canto 1. This combined effort is how ‘speech’ is created, of how the spoken word is generated.

Since spoken words, especially the ones done with finesse and wisdom, are indicative of a person’s knowledge, scholarship, erudition and expertise not only in the language spoken but the subject he is talking about, they help one to express himself and are indispensable instruments for dissemination of knowledge and information. Therefore, this method of pulling up of the Pran to enable one to speak is called Saraswati Chaalan because it activates the function of speech of which Goddess Saraswati is the patron deity. Verse no. 28 ½ of this Canto clearly emphasises that Pranayam clears the throat of accumulated mucous, thereby felicitating clarity of speech and a properly tuned speaking apparatus.

Since acquiring knowledge is a painstaking affair and requires concentrated effort of all the faculties of the body over long periods of time and usually undertaken by sacrificing the natural urge of the body and the mind to indulge in pleasures and comforts of the sense organs and the material world, the activation of the Kundalini and release of its stupendous reserves of energy gives the necessary support and impetus in this auspicious endeavour. Speaking effectively and loudly, articulately and coherently so that others can learn from one's own knowledge, as is done by teachers, public speakers and preachers, requires physical stamina and energy, the activation of the Kundalini takes care of this aspect as well. Since knowledge and learning, speaking and understanding are personifications of the grand virtues symbolised by Goddess Saraswati, the entire phenomenon of activation of the Kundalini is named after her.

There is another way of looking at this thing—the Saraswati Naadi is the mainstay of the effort of pushing up the energy of the Kundalini into the Sushumna Naadi. It not only provides the necessary impetus but also enables the aspirant to experience the progress of this energy upwards and observe the gradual enhancement of the level of conscious bliss and ecstasy as the process advances. Since knowledge is central to anything requiring technical skills and expertise as this exercise of Yoga does, it is deemed to be under the domain of the Goddess who presides over knowledge, i.e. Goddess Saraswati. See note to verse no. 9 also.]

18. By this 'Shakti Chaalan' practice¹, the practitioner of Yoga is able to get rid of diseases such as excrescence (an abnormal outgrowth of the body, such as tumors etc.), dropsy (inflammation of the body and filling of water in tissues), enlargement of the spleen, and all other diseases related to the stomach and abdomen (18).

[Note—¹*Shakti Chaalan* is a dynamic practice of Yoga which involves such exercises as Pranayam, sitting in the two postures of Padmasan and Vajrasan, sucking in the vital winds called Pran and pushing them up through the Kundalini into the Sushumna Naadi along with the Kundalini's subtle energy, and then directing them upwards till they finally reach the head region. This process is called Shakti Chaalan because of two reasons—viz. one, it activates the hitherto dormant cosmic energy in the body that was trapped inside the Kundalini, and two, it requires a lot of energy, stamina, strength and self-control to successfully accomplish it. 'Shakti' itself is indicative of this aspect as it stands for the virtues of power, strength, stamina, vitality, energy and dynamism.]

19. [In the following verse nos. 19-62, the process of Pranayam is described in great detail.]

Now I shall narrate the process of controlling the Pran (vital winds present in the body such as Pran—breath which moves in the upper part of the body, and Apaana—the wind that passes down the intestines and remains located in the lower part of the body). This process is called 'Pranayam'.

Pran is a broad term that is used to define the wind or air element that moves inside the subtle space of the body. When this inherently mobile wind or Pran is made to become static, when its mobility is controlled and it is literally put on hold, then this process is called 'Kumbhak'¹ (19).

[Note—¹The word *Kumbhak* comes from 'Kumbha' meaning an earthen pot or pitcher. Just like the air inside this closed space is static and unaffected by the wind blowing outside the pot or pitcher, the practitioner of Yoga is able to build calmness inside himself inspite of the turmoil and upheavals of the outside world in which he lives if he is able to control the vital winds inside his body by holding them inside his abdomen by

doing the process of Pranayam in a reenactment of the air of the pot or pitcher becoming static inspite of the storm raging outside.]

20. Kumbhak is said to be of two types—viz. ‘Sahit’ meaning ‘including, inclusive, or incorporating; with the help of others, or aided and accompanied by other means’, and ‘Keval’ meaning ‘only, without any match, unparalleled, independently, and without any aid’.

The Sahit form of Pranayam should be done till the time one is not able to become an expert in Yoga and able to do Keval form of Pranayam successfully (20).

21. The Sahit Kumbhak has four types—viz. Surya Bhedan, Ujjaayi, Shitali/Sheetali and Bhastrika (21).

[Note—The four types of Kumbhaks described here have been explained below as follows—(a) Surya Bhedan in verse no. 24-26; (b) Ujjaayi in verse nos. 26-29; (c) Shitali in verse no. 30-31; and (d) Bhastrika in verse no. 32-39.]

22-23. [These verses describe the location to be selected for doing Pranayam.]

One should select an isolated place which is conducive to spiritual practices and relatively comfortable to sit upon (i.e. there are no stones and pebbles or any other thing that can prick and cause constant annoyance and bodily discomfort because this diverts the attention from Yoga by creating diversion), there are no grass and shrubs around (from which insects such as mosquitoes, grasshoppers etc., and reptiles such as snakes, snails and worms etc. can cause any disturbance), and there is no fire, water and cold in the immediate surroundings (i.e. the place is not too hot nor damp or chilly). The place should be calm, quiet and serene as well as generally free from all pollutions.

The aspirant should select an even ground which is neither too high nor too depressed or low but is comfortable in a general way (i.e. the ground should be reasonably even and smooth, and should not have sharp ridges, furrows and grooves as found in ploughed fields, hill or mountain sides, rocky plains etc.), and then spread his meditating mat there. He should sit on it and take the ‘Baddha Padmasan’—the lotus posture (described in verse no. 5 above) in which the two legs are closed in from the knee joints so that the soles of the foot rest one on the top of the other in front of the groins, and the open palms of the hands are placed on the soles in such a way that they rest upon each other and point upwards. Thus, the palms would be roughly placed just in front of the navel. The body is held ram-rod straight, with the buttocks, the spine, the neck and the head in one straight line.

Sitting in this posture, he should practice the Saraswati Chaalan process as described in the previous verses (as described in verse nos. 9-18 above) (22-23).

24. The air should be drawn in gradually through the right nostril and held in the abdomen. Then it is exhaled gradually thorough the left nostril called Ida (named after the Ida Naadi that goes up to here) (24).

25. In the process of ‘Kapal Shodhan’¹, the phase of Rechak, i.e. the phase when the air held inside the body is exhaled, is done slowly. [That is, the breath is not expelled in a hurry or forcefully snorted out, but gradually exhaled in a controlled fashion.]

This helps to eliminate the four types of diseases associated with disturbed Vaat (winds or air) in the body, as well as those ailments that arise from worms (25).

[Note—¹The word *Kapal Shodhan* literally means the cleaning, scrubbing, decongesting or purging of the head of all impurities that clog its subtle spaces. Here it has a physical significance as the process of Pranayam is able to clear any congestion that is present in the mucous linings of the head and restores its original decongested form so that it can think clearly, cogently, coherently, analytically and intelligently, and function in its prime format. The head is freed from general heaviness, congestion, headaches, drowsiness, listlessness and fatigue that are usually caused by numerous diseases that block the Naadis or different nerves and veins that supply impulses and blood to the brain. This is a every day experience that when one suffers from cold and catarrhs, or disturbed stomach or metabolism, or any other disease that cause general discomfort to the physical body, the first to suffer is the man's mind and its ability to work properly. Since Pranayam has an overall cleansing effect on the body by not only de-clogging and scrubbing clean the blocked Naadis (nerves, veins, arteries, ducts etc.) present in the body but also rejuvenating and kindling afresh the body's dying and smouldering fire of life and vitality that has become overburdened and is on the verge of being doused due to numerous factors, it is natural that the brain feels revived, refreshed, invigorated, revitalized and restored. Since the brain is the central processing unit of the body and its controller, a rejuvenated brain directly has a reviving effect on the body. In other words, the aspirant gets a new lease of life and feels re-invigorated and refreshed.

From the perspective of metaphysics and spiritualism this Kapal Shodhan refers to the removal of all doubts and confusions that shroud the mind and prevents it from thinking clearly, intelligently, analytically, rationally and coherently. It helps the mind to become alert and agile so that it can peep behind the external façade of the world to see the hidden 'truth and reality' of existence. An alert and active mind is able to use all its faculties to the best of their abilities; it helps the spiritual aspirant to think intelligently and analytically so that he can separate the chaff from the grain. A mind restored and rejuvenated by Pranayam is an important aid in one's spiritual attainment; it acts as a comrade-in-arm.

It is just like the case of a king having a wise and intelligent Chief Minister as his advisor as opposed to one who is advised by a lax, lazy, incompetent, stupid or drunk advisor. The mind is inherently intelligent and wise; it is its indulgences, misuse, overburdening with trash, wrong company and polluted environment etc. that make it dull and stupid and lose its astounding abilities and glittering virtues. It becomes dull, dark, tainted and corrupted, being shrouded in delusions and ignorance, it generally begins to hallucinate. How can such a mind be an able and wise advisor for the spiritual aspirant? On the other hand, an alert and refreshed mind would naturally be freed from all these fetters and regain its freedom and ability to think and advise the aspirant wisely and intelligently. This is a clear and practical benefit of Pranayam and Yoga in general terms.]

26-29. The above exercise (of verse no. 24-25) should be done repeatedly. This is also called 'Surya Bhedan' Kumbhak [25 ½].

[Now, the second form of Kumbhak called 'Ujjaayi' is being described.]

While keeping the mouth closed, the air (breath) should be drawn in through both the nostrils (as opposed to drawing it in through only one nostril at a time) in such a manner that it produces a subtle sound of hissing or rustling while being drawn in. This air (breath) should then be filled in and confined to the region of the throat and heart [26

½]. After holding this air inside the body as described here, it should be slowly exhaled through the left nostrils called Ida [27].

This helps to eliminate the heat of the head region (and clears the way for the mind to work properly, along with the removal of congestion in the head causing headaches, heaviness, drowsiness, forgetfulness, lack of alertness, and other ailments of the head region), clears the throat of cough, rekindles the subsided fire of the digestive organs (i.e. restores hunger and appetite by making the digestive organs work properly), and thereby remove the very cause of many a diseases. It also helps to re-invigorate, refresh and revive the working of the different ducts in the body (such as the alimentary canal, the various other ducts such as the bile duct, the urethra, the trachea, the nerves, the veins, the arteries, the capillaries and etc.) along with helping one to get rid of different diseases related to Naadis (veins and nerves), as well as from dropsy, incontinence and diseases related with disturbed metabolism [28 ½].

This Kumbhak called 'Ujjaayi' can be done while one sits in any Yoga posture or even while moving around. [That is why inhalation through both the nostrils is allowed—a necessity when one is walking or jogging around or doing any other strenuous activity so that adequate amount of oxygen is taken inside the body to provide oxidation to the tissues and release sufficient energy that is required during physical activities that are strenuous and burn more energy in the body than usually done when Yoga is practiced while sitting quietly.] [29] (26-29).

30. [Verse nos. 30-31 describe the third type of Kumbhak called 'Shitali'.]

During the Shitali Kumbhak, the air is drawn in (i.e. Purak is done) by the open mouth, with the help of the tongue (like done by a panting animal). [That is, in this form of filling the body with inhaled breath, the air is drawn in through the mouth instead of the nostrils as done otherwise in normal Purak.] This inhaled air is held inside the body for a given period of time and then gradually exhaled through the nostrils (and not through the mouth) [30].

[Note—Breathing through the open mouth helps the moist surface of the tongue and the buckle cavity to absorb more quantity of oxygen and at a quicker pace than the normal process by breathing through the nose. It helps better, faster and more intake of oxygen and hence more oxidation of the tissues to not only release extra burst of energy but its faster replenishment. Fresh air is the fuel for the fire burning inside the body in a subtle manner. If the fire does not get proper ventilation, it would be choked to extinction. That is during vigorous exercises we find it extremely convenient and necessary to breathe through the mouth as the body's requirement of oxygen goes up to replenish its faster depleting stock.]

31. This helps to eliminate such diseases as those related with malfunctioning or enlarged spleen, excrescence (an abnormal outgrowth of the body, such as tumors etc.), disturbed bile, fever due to these or related causes, excessive thirst etc. [31].

32-39. [Verse nos. 32-39 describe the fourth type of Kumbhak called 'Bhastrika'.]

To do Bhastrika Kumbhak the practitioner should sit in Padmasan (lotus posture) so that the body is held ramrod straight and the neck is in line with the spine.

To begin with, the mouth is closed and the air (breath) exhaled out or Rechak is done through the nostrils [32].

Then the air is drawn in (inhaled) rapidly during the phase of Purak so that its movement is felt by the throat, palate, head and heart [33].

The process of Rechak and Purak (exhalation and inhalation respectively) is done in quick succession and repeatedly like the ironsmith blowing in air into his bellows [34].

In this way, the air or wind element present inside the body should be carefully activated and mobilized. If one feels fatigued or exhausted in any way, then the Purak (inhalation of air) should be done through the Surya Naadi (corresponding to the right nostril), the air is then held inside the body during Kumbhak by claspings the nose with all the fingers except the index finger (which is held erect), and then Rechak (exhalation of air) is done through the Ida Naadi (corresponding to the left nostril) [36 ½].

This practice eliminates the sensation of burning in the throat (due to excess acidity and disturbances in the mucous lining of the throat) along with increasing or reviving the ebbing fire of the intestines (i.e. this practice restores or increases hunger and appetite). [With restored appetite and rejuvenated digestive organs, it is natural that not only the burning in the throat would vanish as it is usually a symptom of disturbed digestion and excess of bile and acidity, but the general health of the practitioner gets a positive boost and he feels energetic and restored.] [37].

This Pranayam helps one to become aware of the presence and powers of the Kundalini (because the latter gets automatically jerked into activity as affirmed earlier in verse no. 10 above). It bestows all round auspiciousness, blessedness, happiness and joys on the practitioner. It is very auspicious and good for him [37 ½].

Whatever obstacles such as accumulated mucous etc. that are present at the mouth of the Sushumna Naadi and block it, creating a hindrance for the subtle energy of the Kundalini along with the Pran from entering this Naadi, are removed by this practice of Pranayam [38].

It also helps to rupture through or break open the hardened Granthis or knots that symbolically represent the inherent stubborn nature and temperament of the aspirant that have been caused by the three Gunas such as Sata, Raja and Tama present in him in varying proportions. [These Gunas are the basic qualities present in all living beings in different and varying proportions, and their combination decides the individual's personal character and nature. These have so firmly established themselves in him, so firmly engrained themselves in his personality that they appear metaphorically like hard tumors of the body, or gnarls of the fingers, or knurls and knots found on a tree—very stubborn and difficult to remove. The aspirant who does Pranayam is able to overcome this symbolic hardened stiffness in his character or stubbornness in his nature, and instead becomes merciful, compassionate, considerate, malleable, affable, generous, kind and of a general gracious nature. This is equivalent to the symbolic piercing of these knots. Refer verse nos. 67-68 of this Canto 1 also.]

That is why one should diligently practice this Bhastrika Pranayam regularly [39]. (32-39).

[Note—Refer also Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 100.]

40. An aspirant who has sincerely devoted himself in pursuing this path of Yoga should employ three 'Bandhas' (closings or restrictions of subtle apertures of the body) while doing the above described four types of Kumbhaks¹ (40).

[Note--¹The *Bandhas* refer to the closing of the subtle apertures of the body through which the Pran or the vital winds could escape when pressure is exerted on them while doing Pranayam. The three Bandhas are described below.]

41. The three Bandhas are the following—Mool Bandha, Uddiyan Bandha and Jalandhar Bandha. Now there signs or the way to do them is being described (41).

[Note—Refer Dhyan Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 73-78 ½ .]

42. [This verse, along with verse nos. 43-45, describes the Mool Bandha.]

Mool Bandha involves the constriction of the anus and forcefully diverting the Apaana Vayu¹ upwards. This wind is naturally present in the lower part of the body and has a natural tendency of moving downwards and out of the anus instead of going upwards. [This is the reason why force is to be exerted on it to make it change its natural movement and change direction. So it becomes an arduous task to divert it upwards against its will and natural habit.] (42).

[Note—¹The *Apaana* wind is the one that is present in the intestines and moves down and out through the aperture of the anus. It is responsible for movement of the food downwards in the intestines and expulsion of the waste from the body through the anus. When the anus is constricted and shut closed, the trapped Apaana wind gets heated and then when pressure is exerted on it during the course of Pranayam, it is forced to change its direction and move upwards. Besides this, heated air is lighter than cool air, and when it cannot find any exit through the lower end of the body, it would have a tendency to rise up and find an escape route. Thus, finding no other opening except the lower end of the spinal cord, or the Sushumna Naadi, it would force its way in it and then snake upwards. This procedure is called *Mool Bandha*—literally ‘closing of the root’, so named because the Mool Kand, the carrot-like knot of Naadis which form the base or foundation of the body, is located in the region of the anus and the genitals.

The *Tejobindu Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 27 of Krishna Yajur Veda describes Mool Bandha as follows—“The ‘Mool Bandha’ is closing of that spot in the body which is like the base or foundation for all living beings. It is possible to control the mind and its attention by controlling this Mool or root, which can be done by closing it or doing the Mool Bandha. Those who are well versed in the philosophy pertaining to meditation as a tool of Brahm-realisation should be very particular about it (as it helps them to control their mind and its faculties)”.

The word ‘Mool’ means the origin or basis of anything, and ‘Bandha’ means to stop or close. The Mool Bandha is done by pressing the genitals with the heels and constricting the muscles of the anus to close this opening. Meanwhile, the Apaana Vayu (the wind present in the rectum and anus region) is pulled upwards forcefully. It is described in Dhyanbindu Upanishad, verse no. 73-74^{1/2} of Krishna Yajur Veda, as well as in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 46 of Sam Veda tradition.]

43-45. [These three verses describe how the Kundalini is activated by Mool Bandha.]

When this restricted Apaana wind (whose natural movement downwards and out through the anus is restricted by the latter’s closure by doing Mool Bandha) begins its movement upwards, it comes in contact with the fount or the pit of fire (located in the Kundalini and the rest of the sac-like lower abdomen). This hitherto dormant fire is now stoked by this wind/air which begins to swirl around the lower part of the body, thereby rekindling the dormant fire; it begins to burn with renewed vigour and energy [43].

When the Pran (literally ‘the combined life-giving vital wind forces in the body’) is heated and stirred into activity by the combined effect of the fire element present in the body and the diverted Apaana wind¹, it is able to burn all the impurities that have accumulated in the body. [It acts like the blast furnace which burns all things put into it.] [44].

The result of this natural heating process is that the dormant Kundalini is shaken up and stirred into activity much like a sleeping snake being prodded by a heated stick. It then hisses and becomes straightened like that snake [45]. (43-45).

[Note—¹It is to be noted here that this Mool Bandha is done in combination with the Kumbhak phase of Pranayama. When the air is held inside the body during Kumbhak it is natural for it to get heated by the latent heat present inside the body. This is a natural process, especially when Pranayama is done for a prolonged period and the exhalation and inhalation are done rapidly as described in verse no. 34 above.

Refer also verse no. 64-66 of this Canto 1 below.]

46. [This verse describes how the activated energy of the Kundalini enters the Sushumna Naadi.]

When heated, the energy present in the Kundalini now expands and enters the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi (which had hitherto closed the mouth of the Kundalini by plugging it with its lower end) much like the awakened snake slithering into a cave.

That is why it is ordained upon ascetics that they practice Mool Bandh regularly (46).

[Note—Refer Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 104-105, 108.]

47-50. [These verses describe the Uddiyan Bandha.]

The Uddiyan Bandha is done before doing Rechak (exhalation of breath) after the period of Kumbhak (holding of air in the body). This Bandha helps the Pran (here referring to the Apaana wind which has been heated earlier and diverted into the Kundalini) to enter the Sushumna Naadi and move upwards inside it. Since this particular Bandha makes the Pran upwardly mobile, it is called Uddiyan by ascetics. The word ‘Uddiyan’ means ‘one that enables an entity to fly; one that becomes upwardly mobile and is able to fly; one that lifts up’ [47 ½].

To do Uddiyan Bandha, one should sit steadily in the Vajra Aasan posture (described in verse no. 6) and put the hands on the bent legs [48]. The heels are pressed against the genitals from below and this helps to exercise great pressure on the Kanda area—i.e. the Mool Kanda, or the area around the groins [48 ½]. While doing this, the muscles of the abdomen are forcefully pulled inwards and upwards along with similar attempt to constrict the muscles of both the throat and chest. [In brief, attempt is made to constrict the entire muscular system of the lower part of the body and the chest area so that great pressure is exerted on the wind that has entered the Sushumna Naadi, thereby facilitating its upward movement in this Naadi.] [49].

By practicing this exercise, the Pran (vital winds) are able to get absorbed in the tissues of the abdomen in a gradual manner. This helps to eliminate all diseases of the stomach and abdomen. [This is because this exercise tones up the muscles and invigorates them, providing them with new energy and strength to function with renewed vigour. When the tissues are well ventilated and energised, when their toxic wastes are

removed by the scrubbing affect of the Pran rubbing against them, they would too regain their lost strength and energy to function in a prime shape.] That is why this exercise should be practiced regularly and persistently [50]. (47-50).

[Note—Refer Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 106-107.]

51. [This verse describes the Jalandhar Bandha.]

The Jalandhar Bandha is said to be the constricting of the muscles of the throat that is done at the end of Purak (inhalation of breath or air) so that the inhaled air is prevented from escaping (51).

[Note—Refer Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 109-111.]

52. In this way, when the Pran (referring to the vital winds present in the body) is restricted from all sides and put under great pressure by doing Mool Bandha (constricting the anus), Jalandhar Bandha (constricting the throat) and Uddiyan Bandha (constricting the abdomen), it is natural that it would enter the Sushumna Naadi and move up in it. [This is because all exit paths have been blocked and the air inside the sac-like body is pressurized by drawing in and making the muscles taut and rigid. The only opening left open for it is the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi, so it sneaks into it. Since this Naadi is like a tube, the heated wind then automatically moves upwards.] (52).

53. By sitting properly as described above, one should practice the Saraswati Chaalan process of Yoga (as described in verse no. 9-18) and develop control over the Pran, the vital winds (as narrated from verse nos. 19-52) (53).

54-55. [These verses describe the duration of time till which the Pranayam should be done.]

All the four types of Kumbhaks (verse no. 21) should be done ten times each on the first day, and then gradually increased by five times on each consecutive day, i.e. on the second day each type is done fifteen times, on the third day twenty times, and so on. All the three Bandhas (verse nos. 41-52) are employed while doing these four types of Kumbhaks (54-55).

56-57. [These verses list the various precautions that are to be taken while doing Yoga, for otherwise they make the practitioner sick very easily and prove to be his undoing.]

Sleeping during the day, keeping awake during the night, withholding the urge to evacuate the bowels and the bladder (i.e. to resist going to the toilet when necessary), to walk excessively that causes fatigue, not doing the various Aasans (sitting postures) properly, to strain too much in doing Pranayam (breath control exercises), and to constantly worry (over imaginary and real problems)—these are some of the pitfalls or perils against which a wise practitioner should guard because they can make him sick very quickly (56-57).

58-61. [These verses list the ten obstacles in the practice of Yoga. These act as a scourge for him.]

If the practitioner imagines that he has developed some disease by doing Yoga exercises and stops midway, then this is the first obstacle of Yoga [58].

The second obstacle is not to have full faith in the practice and doubt its effectiveness and authenticity. The third obstacle is to get intoxicated and become careless and callous while doing Yoga practice, lacking diligence, perseverance and sincerity. The fourth obstacle is to be lazy and indolent, doing Yoga half-heartedly, without interest and enthusiasm as if it was a forced burden imposed upon him against his will. The fifth obstacle is sleeping too much, more than what is necessary for the body [59].

The sixth obstacle is not to do Yoga lovingly and with great desire to succeed in it, i.e. not having affection for it and lacking sincere devotion for and commitment towards it. The seventh obstacle is to make errors and be deluded with pretensions, such as having a false sense of pride at the greatness, honour and importance that Yoga bestows upon its adherents, or that access to some great mystical powers are just round the corner which would make him much sought after and respected in the society, or that honour, respect, laurels, power and authority are in the offing as a natural reward of Yoga. The eighth obstacle is to be indulgent in and having a yearning for the objects of the senses in this material world along with a desire for self gratification. The ninth obstacle is the fear of ill fame, ignominy, ridicule and dishonour should one fail or not be completely successful in Yoga as expected, or doing Yoga inspite of others around him not doing it or not approving of it as something alien to them, or because they think, though erroneously, that it is some sort of black magic involving postures and exercises that seem to be ridiculous or bordering on black magic, or secret occult practices that are not acceptable in modern society [60].

Wise ones have said that the tenth obstacle is not being able to successfully understand the essentials of Yoga and not being able to obtain its basic benefits (both in terms of spiritual upliftment and enjoying the ecstasy and bliss of realisation of the conscious self, as well as the attainment of various other physical benefits such as acquisition of mystical powers, fine tuning of the body and getting rid of bodily ailments, acquiring name and fame etc.)¹.

A wise and erudite aspirant should ponder over them deeply and take precautions against them. He should eliminate these hindrances in Yoga to be successful in its practice [61]. (58-61).

[Note—¹This observation that ‘the tenth obstacle of Yoga is not being able to successfully understand the essentials of this eclectic philosophy and not being able to obtain its basic benefits’ also implies that one has not been able to properly and correctly understand the wide meaning and great importance of Yoga, both in its physical form as the numerous exercises involved as well as in its metaphysical and spiritual aspects. It includes not properly understanding how to do the various Yoga exercises properly and subsequently failing in them, not knowing their benefits or the pitfalls to guard against, and not understanding that the main purpose of Yoga is to bring about a harmonization between scattered units of a person’s personality and life so that he becomes one complete whole and achieve the optimum level of energy, strength and stamina. Yoga enables him to work to his full capacity and ability to achieve success in life and obtain his set goals with ease and continued enthusiasm. He achieves sufficient backing to reach the pinnacle of spiritual ‘high’ or reach the state of enlightenment when he can personally experience the ecstasy and bliss obtained upon realisation of the supreme Consciousness that pulsates in his entire being as described in the scriptures. He no longer feels

depressed and bogged down with so many bodily and worldly problems, but feels a new surge of restored energy and vitality inside his inner self that not only re-invigorates him but also lifts him from a life of dejection, lethargy, ignorance, delusions and hopelessness to a life of hope, vigour and enlightenment.

From the spiritual perspective, the main objective of Yoga is to bring about a union between the individual 'self' with the cosmic supreme 'Self'. This is not hypothetical and imaginary but actually possible because both of them are essentially personified forms of the eclectic and divine 'Shiva' principle in its pristine purity and majestic glory, albeit viewed at different planes, for while the individual 'self' exists at the micro level of creation, the supreme 'Self' prevails throughout the entire creation at the macro level. Both these units of creation are fundamentally the same; there is no difference, distinction or duality between them. They are called 'Shiva' because they are the same Consciousness that is pure, divine, auspicious, truthful, beautiful and enlightened.

The bringing together of the different vital winds called Pran in the body is a metaphoric way of depicting the union of the various scattered units of creation into one unified whole as mentioned above. All the different Prans in the body control different organs and perform different designated functions. According to *Subalo-panishad*, Canto 9, verse no. 1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are twelve vital winds present in the body. It lists their functions as follows—(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaana—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaana—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Samaana—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambh—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antarayaama—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhajan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naaga—this controls the 'Chitta' or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

So, as is evident now, the scattered working of the consciousness through each of these Prans is brought under one umbrella by doing Yoga. Yoga should not be restricted as merely doing physical exercises to tone up the body like going to a gymnasium and exercising there, but as an all-important and indispensable vehicle for obtaining bliss of spiritual realisation and its attendant all round calmness and tranquility which is the hallmark of self-realised persons and those who have accessed the ultimate Truth of creation that is known as the 'Shiva principle'.]

62. Hence, one should be very sincere and diligent in doing Pranayam. He should be careful and vigilant; he should inculcate the proper virtues of wisdom, erudition, expertise and correct knowledge, both in terms of detailed procedure of Yoga as well as the real aim of doing it, the various perils and obstacles that are to be guarded against, and so on and so forth before embarking upon this spiritual journey in order to eventually succeed in it. [It should not be done for narrow-minded vested interests such as acquiring mystical powers that come automatically with success in Yoga and then using these majestic super-human powers to acquire worldly fame and clout, or terrifying others into submission by threatening them with dire consequences if they disobey, or doing Yoga with half-baked knowledge in a hurry to excel, or to test the veracity and efficacy of the philosophy of Yoga. This would not only be unproductive but very harmful for the practitioner too. It is like playing with live electricity to test its might.]

This due diligence and proper care in how to do Yoga in the correct way and with the correct perspective helps one to concentrate upon doing it. The sub-conscious becomes engrossed in meditation as a result of which the Pran wind begins to move inside the Sushumna Naadi (the duct moving through the spinal cord from its lower end where it opens into the Kundalini, and goes right up to the top of the head). [As any work, even routine worldly duties, requires paying of attention and concentration of all the faculties of the body in order to achieve success in it and getting the best result out of the effort, it is never possible to do Yoga successfully if the mind is fickle and diverted elsewhere. This concentration of the mind also makes the ascetic become conscious of the subtle sensations and titillations emanating from the Sushumna Naadi as it gets activated and the vital winds and the subtle energy of the Kundalini begin to move up in it. An exhilarating sensation of spiritual satisfaction and its accompanying ecstasy overwhelms the practitioner when the rising vital winds and the released energy of the Kundalini begin to tickle the sensory nerves in the spinal cord.] (62).

63. [This verse advises as to when the Apaana wind should be attempted to be moved in and up the Sushumna Naadi.]

Only when the body is fully de-toxified and all the congestions are removed (by doing Pranayam, Aasans, Bandhas etc., and observing other rules of Yoga such as diet control, overcoming the ten obstacles and other pitfalls mentioned earlier) can the Pran (vital winds such as Apaana) move freely inside it (i.e. inside the Sushumna Naadi). It is only then that an attempt should be made to move the Apaana upwards (through the Sushumna Naadi), and not before (63).

64. The process whereby the anus is closed to divert the Apaana wind upwards is called Mool Bandha. This enables the Apaana wind to get heated and accompanied by the energy of the latent fire energy present in the body it begins to move upwards. [Refer verse no. 42-45 also.] (64).

65-66. [These verses tell how the Kundalini is activated.]

When the Pran is also heated, it combines with the Apaana to become one unified 'activated Pran'. [That is, the artificial distinction between Pran, the breath residing primarily in the upper part of the body, and Apaana, the wind in the intestine and primarily residing in the lower part of the body, is removed when they are heated. Actually, air is one, undivided and immutable element that is universal and non-dual. The various distinctions and nomenclatures are made on the basis of their functions and locations to facilitate study, analysis and understanding. The Pran is located in the upper part of the body and is the term applied to the air moving in and out of the body through the nose and mouth. On the other hand, the Apaana is the wind moving down in the intestines and out through the anus. When the nose and mouth along with the throat are closed during the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam, especially done with the Jalandhar Bandha, and it is accompanied with the closing of the anus by doing the Mool Bandha, it is natural that the Pran and the Apaana get trapped inside the sac-like abdomen. This not only heats them but enables their mixing. Thus the artificial distinction is removed, and the combined duo is known hereafter by a single name of 'Pran'.]

The accumulated heat (caused by trapping of the winds inside the body and the closing of the mouth, the nose, the throat and the anus) and the agitated winds exert a combined pressure on the Kundalini, the coiled energy center at the base of the spine, resulting in its uncoiling and getting straightened. It then pushes against and finally enters the mouth of the Sushumna Naadi which lies just at one end of the Kundalini. [The Sushumna Naadi emerges from the center of the spinal cord and blocks one end of the Kundalini facing the lower end of the spinal cord. So when the Kundalini is heated, it straightens and pushes against the Naadi. The pressure and the heat melt the blockade of the mouth of the Sushumna Naadi, and the Kundalini pushes itself into it. Then it releases its energy into this Naadi. This energy and the accompanying vital winds then rise up in it like the mercury does in the bore of the thermometer or a snake slithers into its hole. Refer also verse nos. 42-46, 82-84.] (65-66).

67-68. [These verses describe how the energy of the Kundalini is able to rise high in the Sushumna Naadi and reach the head by breaking through the three 'Granthis' or knots symbolising the three ganglions or glands located at three strategic points in the body. These Granthis are like three formidably strong forts that have to be overcome before the aspirant can reach the citadel where he would come face to face with the 'emperor' called the 'true self' in the form of pure consciousness that comes with self-realisation which is attended by extreme bliss and ecstasy. This experience is the successful culmination of Yoga; it is like conquering of the final fort. If the body is to be treated as a prison for the Atma, the pure and truthful 'self' of the aspirant, then this would mark his liberation and final deliverance because at the height of Yoga, his Pran reaches the top of the head from where it escapes out of the body by rupturing the Brahm Randhra, the slit in the cranium, and merging with the cosmic wind element present outside. The body subsequently disintegrates into its elements such as earth, water, fire and sky. This ensures that there is no new birth for him in any time in future. This is like a prisoner breaking free from a fortress and finding eternal freedom in the vast world outside.]

The subtle cosmic energy released from the activated Kundalini then overcomes the hindrance created by the three 'Granthis' by piercing through them. [The three Granthis are the three knots that tie the various Naadis in the body. Here it refers to the three main ganglions that coordinate all the nerves as well as the three glands which regulate all the veins in the body.]

The first Granthi to be overcome and pierced through by the Kundalini (i.e. its subtle energy which is also called Kundalini Shakti) is the Brahm Granthi (located at the base of the spine). The energy of the Kundalini is like a brilliant ray of electric or a powerful concentrated beam of laser, and potent enough in rupturing this Granthi. In simple words, it is the opening of the mouth of the hitherto blocked Sushumna Naadi or the lower end of the spinal cord. Therefore, it enters the Sushumna Naadi after overcoming this first obstacle, and moves up in it.

Then it reaches and passes through the second Granthi, i.e. the Vishnu Granthi located in the Hridaya Chakra (which is the swirling energy center located in the region of the heart). Finally, it reaches the Rudra Granthi (located in the Agya Chakra in the forehead in the mid-point between the two eyebrows) (67-68).

[Note—The word *Granthi* means a knot. It also refers to the ganglions that help to coordinate the different nerves just like major junction boxes in the network of electric wires in a building. The word Granthi also refers to the glands that control all the major

functions of the body, including those of the nerves and veins. Just like a knot binds something, these Granthis of the body bind the subtle energy present in the body from being released. If we treat them as representing the ganglions then it means that by the process of Yoga in which the subtle energy of the Kundalini is released in the spinal cord, or the Sushumna Naadi to be precise, these hitherto clogged and inactive ganglions are reactivated and they begin to function in prime shape. If we consider them as glands then it would mean that the functioning of these glands is restored and this in turn helps the body to work properly.

These Granthis can be also regarded as aphorisms for the numerous spiritual hurdles faced by a spiritual aspirant in his spiritual journey. The three Granthis are like the three forts that have to be overcome before the final victory over the citadel. If the body is considered as a metaphoric prison for the Atma of the aspirant, then rupturing of the various Granthis is like his breaking free from its walls and finally escaping to the world outside to gain freedom by rupturing the Brahm Randhra located on the top of the head in the final stages of Yoga.

The location of the Granthis is very significant in this context. Let us have a look at this aspect and see why these have been considered as formidable fortresses in this discussion.

The *first* Granthi known as the 'Brahm Granthi' is located in the region where the sexual organs are located. The very fact that Brahm in his manifestation as Brahma the creator is responsible for creating this world, the Granthi is so named after him because the sexual organs are responsible for creation. Overcoming this Granthi is tantamount to control over one's sexual urges which is a very formidable task under normal circumstances. Control of sexual instincts requires a lot of self-control, and once this is successfully achieved the person retains his internal energy that is otherwise wasted in sexual indulgences. The power to create new life by the sexual process makes a man equivalent to Brahma the cosmic creator and the *first* of the Trinity Gods.

The *second* Granthi is known as 'Vishnu Granthi' and is located in the region of the subtle heart. Lord Vishnu is responsible for sustenance and taking care of the creation with care and love. The heart is associated with the virtues of emotions and sentiments as well as of love, compassion, kindness and graciousness as well as longing and desires. This Granthi symbolises the natural characteristics of the heart. It stands for worldly involvement and attachment with the numerous charming material sense objects of the world. It is the heart that makes a man emotionally and sentimentally involved and attached with the world. The obstacle of the heart is so formidable that more often than not the heart prevails over the sane advice given to the creature by his mind not to pursue certain things, and this overbearing nature of the heart only lands him in immense troubles. To overcome the natural impulses of the heart and bring it under control is tantamount to piercing of the second Granthi. Involvement with the world and its affairs is symbolised by the word Vishnu who is the *second* of the Trinity Gods.

Finally, the *third* Granthi is called the 'Rudra Granthi' as it is located in the head where the brain symbolising the mind and intellect with their formidable abilities is located. It is called 'Rudra' because when a man is unable to satisfy his urges and cannot obtain his desired objects, if his ego and pride are hurt, if he fails in any of his endeavours, if he finds that his compatriots succeed in anything in which he has failed, it is natural that he becomes angry, vengeful, wrathful and fretful. In other words, he displays the virtues of being 'Rudra' personified. It is an equally daunting task to control one's anger and its accompanying wrathfulness. Once an aspirant is able to control his anger along with the control of the other two natural urges, he becomes a truly self-controlled and realised soul. Display of the virtues of Rudra makes a man equivalent to Lord Shiva, another name of Rudra, who is the *third* of the Trinity Gods.

According to Tantra literature, there are three Granthis—viz. Brahm Granthi, Vishnu Granthi and Rudra Granthi. They obstruct the upwards movement of the energy or power of the Kundalini. Each of the six Chakras (whirling energy centers of the body) has two Granthis on either side.

The Brahm Granthi is situated between the Muladhar Chakra and Swadisthan Chakra. The Vishnu Granthi is situated between Manipur and Anahat Chakras. The Rudra Granthi is located between Vishuddha Chakra and Agya (Gyan) Chakra. The energy or cosmic divine powers of the Kundalini has to pierce through these three knots before it can reach the Sahasraara Chakra at the top of the head.

Refer: Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 86-89 also.]

69. It then passes through the center of the eyebrows (i.e. through the Agya Chakra) and reaches the realm of Chandra (Moon) where the Anahat Chakra shaped like a lotus flower having sixteen petals is located (69).

[Note—The *Chakras* according to the Tantra philosophy are swirling energy centers of the body, and they are shaped like lotus flowers having varying number of petals.]

70. This energy of the Kundalini which has reached the realm of the Chandra (Moon) in the forehead (between the eyebrows and the root of the nose) now dries up the secretion of the Chandra which effuses in this area. [That is, it dries up the mucous that might be present in the area of the sinus region of the forehead. It acts as a natural decongestant that clears the head and makes the practitioner mentally alert. See verse no. 71 below.]

Being propelled by the vital wind forces of the body, and stoked by the energy of the Surya (Sun) subtly present in the body and represented by the latent heat energy that prevails throughout the body and its tissues, the ‘Kundalini Shakti’ (i.e. the dynamic cosmic energy arising from the Kundalini which had been mixed earlier with the two vital winds—viz. the Pran and Apan according to verse no. 65)—now accepts the blood and bile of the body. [In other words, it symbolically accepts the heat and energy present inherently in these two entities—blood and bile. Or conversely, it cools them down and absorbs their energy to re-energise and revive itself by restoring its low level of energy and heat that it might have lost earlier whilst overcoming the Granthis and breaking through the various other hurdles as it moves ahead from the lower part of the body to the upper parts. It is like the case of a space vehicle which has reached certain height after its initial launch when it fires another rocket to provide it with sufficient boost and power to enable it to break free from the gravitational pull of the earth and enter space for its onward journey to another planet, which in this case would be the ultimate ‘Shiva Tattva’ or the ecstasy of Brahm-realisation mentioned below in verse no. 74.] (70).

71. Upon reaching the area called the realm of the Chandra (Moon) the Kundalini Shakti heats and then soaks up the white mucous present there by its own inherent heat. Thus it removes the coldness from this area. [This refers to the stuffy feel that comes with the nostrils and the forehead getting choked by mucous when one catches cold. The practice of Pranayam would activate the Kundalini, and its heat would act as a decongestant and clear the blocked nose and head of sticking mucous. The heat of the Kundalini Shakti would literally burn or kill the germs and therefore act as a natural anti-biotic in colds and catarrhs. This would effectively remove ‘cold’ from this area.] (71).

72. The Kundalini Shakti heats the white Chandra representing the tissues that effuse white mucous, and having done this it then moves ahead upwards. [That is, once the passage of the nostrils and the forehead is cleared, the subtle energy of the Kundalini and Pran now move to the top of the head to give the practitioner the much sought-after sense of extreme bliss and ecstasy.] (72).

73. This is the stage when the aspirant tastes the nectar-like bliss and experiences the exhilarating joy that accompanies the realisation of the presence of the eternal fount of bliss and divine ecstasy that resides in his own 'self' as the consciousness known as the Atma. As a result, his mind—which had hitherto sought to acquire happiness and joy from the external world and its material objects of sense gratifications which are nevertheless transient and perishable by nature—would now no longer need to do so because it has now found an eternal source of bliss and unbound ecstasy inside the aspirant's own self (in the form of the bliss and ecstasy that comes when one experiences the presence of the pure consciousness residing in one's own bosom) (73).

[Note—Refer Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 127, 146 in this context.]

74. In this way, the Kundalini Shakti is able to transcend or overcome the hurdles created by the eight-fold Prakriti or the eight types of hindrances that come in the way of one realising one's true nature as pure consciousness known as the Atma¹.

As a result, the ascetic is able to have a first hand experience of 'Shiva' (the eternal Truth and auspicious consciousness known as the Atma) residing in his own self. This realisation is self-realisation. The cumulative affect of all this is that the grosser form of the cosmic consciousness in the form of the various Prans (vital winds of the body that keep the body alive and active) plunges into and become one with the subtler form of the same divine cosmic consciousness known as the Atma (the 'true self' of the man and the only truth that really matters from the spiritual perspective).

In other words, the culmination of Yoga is to help one realise one's true divine form and find rest in the spiritual glory of self-realisation, the discovery of the ultimate fount of bliss and joy residing in one's own bosom as the 'consciousness' known as the Atma (74).

[Note--¹These eight obstacles are the following—the five elements such as the sky, air, fire, water and earth which form the structure of the gross body + the Mana or mind + the Buddhi or intellect that together make up the subtle part of this body + Ahankar or ego and pride which forms the basic quality that prevents a man from coming to terms with the fact that what he has acquired in this world is not the real thing and all his efforts of gaining happiness from the material objects of the world have yielded nothing for him in real value. Thus the total comes to 5 elements + 1 Mana + 1 Buddhi + 1 Ahankar = 8.]

75. The 'Raja', i.e. the fluid of the female organ which is red in colour representing the fiery celestial cauldron known as the sun (and personified by the blood element of the body which stands as a metaphor for life and heat because blood sustains life and is hot by nature), and the 'Shukla', literally meaning 'white' but here referring to the male fluid called semen which is white in colour and symbolises the moon (which is personified as the mucous element of the body), are thoroughly churned, battered and mixed by this process of Yoga. This combination then rises up the Kundalini and the Sushumna Naadi

when whipped up by the vital winds, i.e. the Pran and the Apaana, as these are heated and made to enter the Kundalini and move up the Sushumna Naadi (as described in earlier verses).

At the culmination of this process, these two—the two primary fluids that infuse life into this body, i.e. the female Raja and the male Shukla, and the two vital winds called the Pran and Apaana, merge into one homogenous entity that is known as ‘Shiva’. That is why these four units of creation are said to have a similar origin¹ (75).

[Note--¹This is a symbolic representation of the basic fact that every life form has only one origin in the supreme transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm at the macrocosmic level of creation, and as the Atma at the microcosmic level of existence. It is from the single cell that the sperm and ova are formed, the distinction arising due to the role that they are assigned to perform in the scheme of creation, and similarly no matter what name is assigned to the wind element depending upon the function it performs it would nevertheless always remain the same indivisible element known as air or wind which has no inherent distinctions between its various manifestations. The primary aim of Yoga is to bring about a union and harmony between two or more units of creation which are fundamentally one and the same but for reasons arising out of ignorance and its attendant delusions have come to be regarded as separate and independent units—which they are basically not. When this eclectic knowledge dawns upon the spiritual aspirant, he is overwhelmed with the bliss that comes with obtaining eternal peace and a sense of achievement that accompanies the fulfillment of one’s long-lasting search for the real and eternal Truth.

This process of mixing of the vital forces of Nature present inside the body so that oneness or uniformity between them is obtained is the main aim of Yoga as prescribed in this and other Yoga Upanishads. It is symbolised by the stirring of the Kundalini’s subtle cosmic energy and activation of the Sushumna Naadi aided by the process of Pranayama and various Asanas and Bhandhas. The churned and heated vital winds called Pran and Apaana whip up a virtual storm inside the body and arouse the other two fundamental elements of life, i.e. the male energy and the female energy representing Brahm and Shakti or Maya respectively, and mix them into one homogenous gel that then rises up the Sushumna Naadi to pass through the various hurdles and finally reach the forehead. It then transcends it to finally reach the upper area of the head where the aspirant experiences the sensation of extreme ecstasy and bliss that comes with realisation of the presence of the supreme fount of eternal consciousness present in one’s own self. This is the culmination of the process of Yoga and the fulfillment of the desire for attaining self-awareness and self-realisation.

The word *Shiva* here refers to the subtle, sublime, auspicious, divine and truthful consciousness of which one becomes aware at the time of culmination of Yoga. It is the symbolic union of the independent forces of life inside the body into one uniform non-dual Atma, the true ‘self’ of the aspirant. This is the picture at the microcosmic level of the individual. When this Pran finally escapes from the body into the outer atmosphere to merge with the all-pervading air or wind element outside, the other component elements of the gross body—such as earth, water, fire and sky—too merge with their primary forms when the body lacking the Pran dies and disintegrates. This finishes off the job of attaining final Mukti or liberation and deliverance for which the aspirant had set about doing Yoga in the beginning. This merger of the elements with their cosmic counterparts lends the individual creature a macrocosmic presence. Once a wise, enlightened and self-realised person becomes aware of the universal spiritual truth that his ‘true self’ is not the gross body but the subtle and sublime Pran symbolising the

cosmic spark of life called ‘consciousness’, he no longer remains a gross person with a body, but becomes sublimity and subtlety personified!]

76. Even as solid gold melts and expands when subjected to heat, the subtle and sublime cosmic energy lying hitherto dormant and coiled-up inside the body (in the Kundalini) expands and spreads throughout it—whether this body is small (such as those of a child) or big (such as those of a grown up man)—to cover each nook and corner of the body when the energy is stoked and heated. [This is done by the arousal of the Kundalini as per the process described in this Upanishad above.] (76).

77-78. [These verses describe the subtle changes that take place in the body when the divine energy of the Kundalini is activated by the process of Yoga. Refer also verse nos. 65-66, 70-71.]

Under the auspicious influence of the divine and sublime cosmic energy when it is activated inside the body (by the process of Kundalini activation), this gross body assumes a form that is godly in nature—that is, from being ‘Adhibhautik’ it becomes ‘Adhidaivik’ (i.e. from being mortal and perishable, inert and inane, subject to various faults and shortcomings associated with the gross organs and the buffeting effects of the restless mind—collectively called the Adhibhautik body, it becomes one that is stable, eternal, holy and imperishable, a body that assumes certain divine characteristics that transcend the limitations imposed on a gross physical body by the forces of Nature—collectively called the Adhidaivik body). The gross body transforms into a most subtle and sublime form [77].

It (the body) abandons its gross, perishable, polluted, lowly, inane and inert nature to become sublime, subtle and divine in form that is clean, holy, auspicious and conscious of its exalted stature as being the abode of the supreme Brahm residing inside it as the pure conscious Atma. This exalted state of the body is obtained only by those who have obtained success in Yoga (as narrated in this Upanishad), and not by others who are engulfed in ignorance and delusions [78]. (77-78).

[Note—This is the reason why holy men effuse a divine glow of divinity and spiritual energy which forms a halo around them. Ordinary men lack this effulgence. Yoga cleans the body so thoroughly that all the impurities that normally cloak the Atma and prevents its natural illumination from shining through are removed, resulting this divine light to illuminate the whole being of the aspirant. The divine halo that is observed around holy and self-realised persons is actually the light of the Atma, the pure consciousness, shining through. It is like cleaning the glass covering around the wick of a lantern so that its light can illuminate the surroundings.

The skin is not as transparent as the glass of the lantern, but is more like a translucent piece of glass found in chandeliers and decorative lightings. The lighted wick is not clearly visible here, but only its diffused light illuminates the surroundings. The skin is so thick that one cannot see the bones and other internal organs, so it is no mean achievement that the glow of the consciousness is visible from the outside as a halo around enlightened men.]

79-80. When the spiritual aspirant becomes aware of his ‘true self’, i.e. about his pure consciousness as his Atma representing his truthful identity as the ‘self’, it is only then that he finds Mukti, or freedom from the fetters of this mundane life of birth and death involving a gross and perishable body (because he would have now realised that his true

self is not the body which takes birth, gets old and dies, but the Atma which never takes any birth and never dies as it is eternal and imperishable). He is deemed to be therefore liberated from the shackles of Kaal, or death personified (because he no longer fears death and being the eternal and imperishable Atma instead of the body, he will not have to die at all).

Successful culmination of Yoga makes him wisened and enlightened about the existence of the ‘truthful self’ in the form of the consciousness residing inside his bosom which is distinct and separate from the gross body. He is reassured of the truth that this body is perishable and mortal when all delusions arising out of ignorance of the ‘true self’ are removed just like a person feeling reassured and confident when he discovers the illusion that what he was fearing as a dangerous snake is in fact a harmless piece of rope, or when he discovers that the appearance of silver foil inside the shell of an oyster (because the inside glistens like silver foil does in light) is nothing but an optical illusion, or that the distinction between a male and a female is basically artificial when he realises that the same Atma lives inside both the bodies and the fact that both the bodies have the same ingredients as their fundamental building blocks. That is, these facts make him wiser, and he is no longer led astray by illusionary appearances (79-80).

81. Such a wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant sees no difference between a rounded ball of cereals called Pinda and the universe both of which are rounded in their external form. He also sees no fundamental difference between his subtle truthful ‘self’ and the microcosmic Atma—as both are the same ‘consciousness’ personified. Therefore, he is firmly established in the ultimate Truth of creation—that the self-illuminated Atma of the individual and the cosmic supreme transcendental Atma at the macrocosmic level called the Parmatma are one and the same entity (81).

82-84. [These verses describe the shape of the Kundalini and how the dormant fire element in the body is ignited.]

The Kundalini is like the coiled stem of the lotus flower, while the Mool Kand (the clutch of Naadis at the base of the spinal cord) is like the bulbous root of the same lotus. Much like a snake coiled in such a way that the end of its tail is inside its mouth, this Kundalini lies with its mouth covered by the Brahm Randhra Naadi¹ [82 ½].

To awaken this Kundalini, the aspirant is advised to sit in a Padmasan posture, constrict and pull up the anus, do Kumbhak (holding of the breath during Pranayam), divert the vital wind (i.e. the Apaana wind) of the body upwards and make it strike the Swadisthan Chakra² so that the dormant fire element in the body is ignited³ [84]. (82-84).

[Note—¹This Brahm Randhra Naadi is the Sushumna Naadi—so called because it goes right up to the top of the head where the Brahm Randhra, the hair-like slit in the skull, is located, and through which the vital winds find their way out when an expert ascetic wishes to leave the body at the time of his death. In other words, the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi blocks the opening of the Kundalini like a cork on a bottle.

²The Swadisthan Chakra is the swirling subtle energy center of the body located in the region of the groins of males and the Bhug area of females. It has a 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed and its counterpart in the female is the clitoris.

³In essence this verse means that when the Apaana wind is restricted by doing Mool Bandha involving the closing of the anus along with Jalandhar Bandha when the throat is closed and constricting of the muscles of the abdomen during Uddiyan Bandha, an

immense amount of pressure is exerted on the Apaana wind. It buffets the Swadhisthan Chakra which is like blowing of air in the lower end of the furnace. This would obviously stoke the fire energy present in a dormant form in the Kundalini. This situation is like the lighting of the fire in an oven. When air is blown into the ovens from the lower end, the firewood placed on the grate catches fire easily and burns vigorously.

Refer verse no. 42-46 and 65-66 of this Canto 1 also.]

85-86. By this method the sleeping or dormant Kundalini is awakened or shaken up and made active. The subtle cosmic energy present in it is then unleashed and it rises up to pierce through the three Granthis, viz. the Brahm Granthi, the Rudra Granthi and the Vishnu Granthi¹, besides piercing through the six Chakras² and reach Sahastraar Chakra symbolically depicted in the form of a subtle lotus with a thousand petals present in the top of the head, i.e. the Brahm Randhra which is located at the top of the head just below the cranium.

At this point of Yoga one experiences a gloriously divine spray of extreme bliss and ecstasy spraying upon him and drenching him from all sides, which metaphorically represents the union of the divine Shakti with the eternal fount of truthfulness, bliss and joyous abandon called Shiva³. [Here, the 'Shakti' is symbolised by the cosmic divine conscious energy that is made active by doing Yoga and activating of the Kundalini, and 'Shiva' represents the awareness that comes with it of the presence of the pure consciousness called the Atma as one's true 'self'. This Atma is eternal, truthful, imperishable, immutable and non-dual; it is divine and sublime. When the aspirant becomes aware of it, he is filled with an extreme sense of spiritual achievement and contentedness at the fulfillment of his desire for attaining a state of eternity and perpetual bliss. He would want nothing more; he has reached the pinnacle of spiritual attainment that is rare and difficult to achieve.] (85-86).

[Note—¹The three *Granthis* and their vanquishing has been described in note to verse no. 67-68 of this Canto 1 above.

²The six *Chakras* are the subtle energy centers of the body. Briefly they are the following—(1) The 'Mooladhar Chakra' is located between genitals and anus in the area called the perineum. It is the site of the symbolic Shiva Lingam (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 168) and the route through which the Apaana wind finds its entrance in the Kundalini (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 13). It is also here that the ascetic hears the Naad. It is said to be a symbol of Shakti or the dynamic powers of Shiva principle (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 8, 11-12 and Canto 3, verse no. 2). (2) The 'Swadhisthan Chakra' is located in the region of the groins of males and the Bhug area of females. It has a 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed and its counterpart in the female is the clitoris. (3) The 'Manipur Chakra' is located in the navel area, is shaped like a gem and is surrounded by the network of Naadis (nerves) called solar plexus. It is also the site of the Sun energy. (4) The 'Anahat Chakra' is located in the chest between the heart and lung area and it is shaped like a swan looking downwards. It is also assumed to be like an 8-petal lotus facing down. It is also called the Hridaya Chakra because of its close proximity to the heart and close association with it as the Atma or pure consciousness resides in the subtle space of the heart. (5) The 'Vishuddha Chakra/Kanth Chakra' is located in the throat. To the left of it passes the Eda nerve representing the moon, to its right goes the Pingla nerve representing the sun, and in the center is the Sushumna nerve through which the Kundalini energy rises up from the base of the spine to the skull. (6) The 'Agya Chakra or Bhru Chakra' is located between

the eyebrows and root of the nose. It is also called the third eye of enlightenment and wisdom.

Besides these six, there are some other important Chakras, and they are the following—(7) The ‘Brahm Rahandra Chakra or *Sahasraar Chakra*’ is located in the head and has the form of a grey cloud or smoke. It is the hair-like spilt in the top of the skull from where the vital wind called ‘Pran’ makes its exit from the body of a Yogi (ascetic) at the time of his death. (8) The ‘Vyom Chakra’ is symbolic of the sky and it is shaped like a 10-petal lotus located at the top of the head. (9) ‘Bhug Chakra’ is triangular in shape and represents the female genital organ. It is also called ‘Kaam Roop Peeth’ from where all passions and desires originate (refer *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 170-171). (10) The ‘Talu Chakra’ is also called *Raajdant* as well as *Ghantikaa*, and it is closely related to the *Kanth Chakra*. It is the route to the 10th door of *Brahm*. It is located in the palate (back of the mouth).

The Chakras’ locations have been mentioned in Canto 3, verse no. 9-11.

³Refer verse nos. 67-75 above of this Canto 1 in this context.]

87. This eclectic and exalted state of existence is tantamount to spiritual liberation and deliverance, called *Mukti*, and is the blissful and ecstatic state of enlightenment and self-awareness (87).

[Note—In this context of *Mukti* obtained by activation of the *Kundalini* and the *Sushumna Naadi* through which the *Pran* of the ascetic moves to the top of the head, the *Kshuriko-panishad* of the *Krishna Yajur Veda* tradition, in its verse nos. 18-19, describes how the *Pran* finally escapes through the *Brahm Randhra* to provide final liberation to the spiritual aspirant.]

Canto 2

[This Canto describes in detail one of the most difficult but nevertheless an important exercise of Yoga called the ‘*Khechari*’. While on the one hand it is so potent that it can bestow upon its practitioner the ability to float or fly in the air, but on the other hand it is most dangerous to adventure into this field without proper guidance as it is equally potentially fatal if not done properly. So it should always be practiced under the aegis of an experienced teacher. It is a long haul endeavour, taking as much as twelve long years to be rewarding. Refer also to *Yogchudamani Upanishad*, verse nos. 51-59 of the *Sam Veda* tradition, *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad*, 2/1/8 of *Shukla Yajur Veda* tradition, and *Yogshikha Upanishad*, 5/40-42 of *Krishna Yajur Veda* tradition in this connection.]

1. Now we shall discuss the *Khechari*¹ *Vidya* (i.e. the knowledge pertaining to the special posture of Yoga called by this name of *Khechari*). This knowledge and its diligent practice helps one to become free from old age and its decrepiting effects as well as having a long life and becoming eternal in a symbolic way² (1).

[Note—¹The word *Khechari* is derived from the root ‘*Khe*’ which stands for the sky, and ‘*Chari*’ means to move, to wonder or to roam. Therefore, the combined word ‘*Khechari*’ means one who can move in the sky. This *Mudra* has been graphically described in *Gherand Sanhita*, verse no. 25-28, besides the *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse nos. 40-42, the entire Canto 2 of the *Yog Kundalini Upanishad*; and *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad*, verse nos. 81-93 of *Krishna Yajur Veda*; as well as in *Yogchudamani Upanishad*, verse

nos. 52-64 of the Sam Veda tradition, and in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 2/1/8 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

It ought to be noted that the Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 52-64, and Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 81-93 elaborately describe its benefits, and one such practical benefit is the natural way of contraception as clearly described in these two Upanishads.

The *Khechari Mudra* is amongst the best and toughest body postures that can be adopted by any ascetic, but at the same time it can empower the practitioner with stupendous mystical and occult powers and potentials. It involves elongation of the tongue by constantly pulling it out and making it flexible by constant flexing, rolling and shaking from side to side. The nerves and veins at the lower end are cut so as to make them senseless. To obtain success in this, the tongue is smeared with butter and stretched by holding it with an iron tong. This results in the tongue getting sufficiently elongated as to reach the inner opening of the mouth by inverting it backwards, and then it is tucked at the base of the upper palate to close the opening of the nostrils at the roof of the mouth cavity. When the elongated and backwards bent tongue is stuffed here, these openings of the nostrils are closed by it, thereby blocking the flow of air (breath). Meanwhile, the sight is fixed unwaveringly at a point midway between the two eyebrows.

The benefits of Khechari Mudra have been listed in Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-4, 21-24, 49.

²Yoga in general has a definitive positive affect on the body and general health besides its spiritual value. It's a very potent and powerful instrument in the hands of any spiritual aspirant to reach his goal of liberation and deliverance on the one hand, and to maintain good health and lead a fruitful life by ordinary people who might not be as spiritually enlightened on the other hand. For the latter, the hidden benefits of Yoga would come on a platter even without their asking for them and as an unexpected bonus or gift. What better can any endeavour be when its rewards are got even without seeking them almost as an expected windfall. Since Khechari is a higher form of Yoga, its results would also be commensurate to its exalted stature; its rewards would be equally more enduring and powerful. The speed with which the body decays and suffers from the decrepiting effects of old age is reduced and virtually put on hold if one practices Yoga diligently. This is because he observes rigid self-discipline in all spheres of life—such as in his eating habits, his general life style, his working, his indulgences and all other physical activities as well as mental thoughts. All these help to tone up the body, and though the latter is destined to come to an end one or the other day but it would be a painless and natural process rather than that imposed by artificial living which shortens life and makes it more of a burden than something to be enjoyed. Lack of discipline and self control plays havoc with the body and its functions, which in their wake make the person prey to numerous diseases and problems that begin to afflict him and have an upper hand on him. A long life led healthily and peacefully to its natural end in some distant future in comparison to a life full of bodily aches and pains so much so that the person prefers death than another day of agonies is a metaphoric long life begot as a reward of Yoga.

In practical life it is observed that certain people lead a happy and peaceful life inspite of facing the same set of problems that seem like a burden to others. Yoga calms one down sufficiently enough to achieve this exalted mental state of equanimity and calmness.

Besides this physical benefit, the philosophical aspect of long life is the eclectic realisation that the 'true self' is not the gross body but the ethereal Soul or the Atma which is nothing but pure consciousness living in this body, and that this sublime and divine entity known as the Atma is eternal, imperishable and infinite unlike the body.

Hence, the aspirant indeed becomes 'eternal, imperishable and infinite' like the Atma because the latter is his true 'self'.]

2. A person who is tormented by old age, numerous diseases and death staring in his face should diligently practice the Khechari Vidya (2).

3-4. One should acquire a thorough knowledge of this Khechari Vidya by seeking it from some wise and expert teacher by taking shelter with him and becoming his devoted disciple. [In other words, an aspirant who wishes to overcome the various problems of the body should practice Yoga, and for this he must first seek out a competent teacher who himself is an expert in this field and then request the latter to accept him as his student. He should take refuge with such a wise teacher of Yoga, and put himself in his care and guidance.]

The teacher ought to be carefully selected as he must be well accomplished and well known in this world as an expert in this specialised field of knowledge called Khechari. He should have thoroughly studied this Vidya from scriptures dealing with it, should be an acknowledged expert in this field who has an in-depth knowledge of all its finer intricacies and different aspects, besides actually practicing this form of Yoga himself. [Because it is only then that he would be able to give correct and precise guidance to the aspirant and alert him on its various pitfalls and perils besides advising on how to best avoid them or overcome them.]

This Khechari Vidya has the mystical potentials of eliminating the miseries and torments associated with old age, death and various diseases. Its knowledge and practice are both very difficult (3-4).

5. This Khechari Vidya is fruitful only when it is practiced along with the mystical meditation process called 'Melan'¹. In other words, they must be practiced simultaneously or in close association with each other (5).

[Note—*Melan* literally means establishing a union between the Pran Shakti (the mystical powers of the vital life-infusing wind forces inside the body) and the Shiva-Shakti (the divine and supernatural powers of the consciousness called the Atma residing inside the bosom of the aspirant). The 'Shiva' is the cosmic Truth and Consciousness that resides in the body of the individual as his Atma or soul, and the 'Shakti' is the power, strength, authority and potentials of the Atma.

The union or Melan is brought about by the method of using the Mantras meant to be repeated during the Khechari Mudra (and this is given in verse nos. 17-20 of this Canto 2 and in verse no. 1 of Canto 3) under the proper guidance of the teacher. It helps to bring about this union by focusing of the mind.]

6. Oh Brahmin! It might be possible to do practice but it is rare to achieve Melan even after hundreds of births (6).

[Note—One might be successful in doing the physical exercise of Khechari form of Yoga, but its final aim to bring about a union between the Pran and the Atma is difficult to achieve. It is like a student being successful in finding admission in an excellent college but that does not mean that he would either excel in his studies or in life. At best, the environment of the college, the faculty and the facilities available there can help him in the pursuit and attainment of his own goals in life, but the final result and achievement would depend upon the individual's own diligence, efforts, competence, aptitude,

intelligence, wisdom, sincerity and so many other factors. Learning the skills in college and being able to apply them in practice in real life situations are totally different propositions.

Similarly, a good teacher and circumstances can aid a spiritual aspirant to reach higher spiritual goals of life, but ultimately he is the one who would have to walk the mile which is like walking a tight-rope as far as Yoga is concerned, because while it is rewarding on the one hand, it is equally dangerous if not done properly on the other hand. The road can lead up to the citadel, but the road would not move there and neither would the citadel come down to receive him!]

7. This Melan (union between the Pran and the Atma as described in note to verse no. 5 above) is achieved by an aspirant after diligently trying to accomplish it in many births, and after a long period of sincere practice (7).

8. It is only when the aspirant accepts the Melan Mantra (i.e. the mystical formula that brings about successful fusion of the Pran (or vital life-infusing winds) and Shiva (or the truthful 'self' known as the Atma which is cosmic Consciousness living inside the body of the individual) from an accomplished Guru (a moral preceptor, a teacher and guide of Khechari Vidya) and practices it sincerely according to the prescribed method as laid out for it in the scriptures that he attains success in it in the sense that it bears fruits for him and bestows upon him certain Siddhis (mystical authority and super-human powers) (8).

9. When the aspirant is able to understand this Melan Mantra fully and comprehend its esoteric meaning and spiritual import, it is only then that he gets liberation and deliverance from the shackles of this ocean-like intractable and un-crossable gross world and becomes a personification of the truthful, eternal, divine and sublime entity known as Shiva. [That is, by properly understanding the spiritual importance and significance of the Melan Mantra and how it brings about a union or fusion between his Pran and Atma at the microcosmic level of existence, and between this combine of Pran-Atma at the individual level and the all-pervading and all-inclusive cosmic transcendental Consciousness at the macrocosmic level, he is able to establish oneness between his gross existence as the man having a body and his sublime existence as the Atma or soul which is pure and conscious 'self' residing inside his own bosom as a personification of Brahm symbolised by the word Shiva—an entity that is truthful, eternal, divine, holy and auspicious. When this is achieved, the grossness vanishes and only sublimity survives.] (9).

10. [Verse nos. 10-13 stresses the importance of the scriptures and their study.]

It is most important to note that even the wisest of Guru is not able to impart knowledge without the help of scriptures; therefore it is imperative for a wise student or disciple to have direct access to the scriptures. That is, oh wise sage, since no knowledge is available and sustainable without the scriptures, it is of utmost importance to have knowledge of the scriptures (10).

[Note—Even the teacher has learnt anything through a thorough study of some text, and it is better for a student to access this text directly. The reason is that, one, if there is some confusion then there is a standard text to decide the matter, and second, there is always a possibility of the teacher himself erring inadvertently or himself not being aware of certain things that the more intelligent student might discover. After all, the teacher is a

human being himself with his own limitations and failings. Therefore, the importance and significance of the scriptures can never be either overstated or underrated.]

11. Therefore, the aspirant should diligently and sincerely search for the scriptures everywhere in this world wherever they are available even if it involves going to far off places in search of them. When truthful scriptures (i.e. the ones that are genuine, authentic and original without interpolations and tweaking done by others, because they would then be deemed to be corrupted) are accessed and studied thoroughly, their teaching should be implemented in life. It is then that spiritual success and its attendant rewards are soon and easily available to the aspirant (11).

12-13. Success and accomplishment in any field, let alone spiritual practice, is not possible in the whole world having three dimensions (i.e. in the past, the present and the future time; in the terrestrial, the heavenly and the nether worlds) without a thorough study and implementation of the various principles and doctrines enunciated by the scriptures. [That is, one should always consult standard texts if one expects to inculcate truthful knowledge in any field, and metaphysics is no exception. If the source material of any knowledge is corrupted, it is obvious that the knowledge it imparts would also be corrupted and prove detrimental for the good of the seeker of this knowledge. So, great importance should be placed on accessing truthful and authentic scriptures from reliable sources.]

That is why the Guru who teaches the scriptures and explains them, who himself practices the great tenets of these scriptures as well as the Yoga of Melan (i.e. who puts the knowledge of the scriptures into practice himself and practices meditation that helps to bring about a union between the individual and his true self as the pure conscious Atma), is deemed to be a revered image of the exalted God himself¹.

Such a wise teacher who is a regular practitioner of what he teaches is to be regarded as a living image of Shiva, a personification of Shiva, and offered due reverence and worship. An aspirant should seek his shelter and patronage in his own spiritual pursuit. [This is because such a man is the right guide who would show the correct path to the aspirant. He has had a first hand experience of the pitfall, perils and obstacles of Yoga and the precautions needed to avoid them or overcome them. This expert guidance makes the path all the more easier for the aspirant.]

It is expected that once one has acquired this eclectic mystical knowledge, he would not disclose it to unworthy people (because this knowledge of the Khechari Mudra of Yoga is like live fire, and put into wrong hands it would be catastrophic and devastating). [Refer verse no. 25 of this Canto 2.] (12-13).

[Note--¹This is basically meant to emphasise the point that since it is the teacher who makes a man worth his salt as a human being, what he is worth for, since it is the teacher who him the light and spiritual path by unfolding the great secrets enshrined in the scriptures—or for that matter any field of knowledge—and explains them threadbare to the disciple, removing all his doubts and misgivings, and generally bringing the esoteric texts and their mysteries and hidden meaning within his grasp, for otherwise the same knowledge might have been worthless for the student like a set of meaningless words had they not been explained to him by the teacher, it follows therefore that the teacher deserves all the respects and regards that a disciple can muster for someone who has shown him the true path of knowledge and made him educated and enlightened by

removing the veil of ignorance that had shrouded him earlier like a foreboding dark shadow.

The teacher is like someone who comes to the rescue of a person trapped in a bog and is being rapidly sucked in. The material world and its delusions are like entrapments that not only ensnare the creature but rob him of all his peace and happiness for all times to come. He is so pre-occupied with the world and its never-ending work that he does not realise that he is trapped at all. It is only when he reads the scriptures or comes in contact with liberated souls who are fortunate enough to have tested spiritual freedom that he realises his predicament and precarious state of existence. A wise creature would then decide that it is never too late to make a beginning, for without making the first move, without taking the first step, no one can reach the destination however far it is. So, he takes the shelter of a Guru because the person is totally ignorant of the path ahead and the proper way to walk on it with full preparation. He needs expert advice and guidance.

Citing the example of the bog here as mentioned above, even his own companions are of no help to him because they themselves are trapped and need help. Therefore, when he comes in contact with a wise and self-realised Guru, it's like a boon from the heaven for him. The Guru extends a helping hand and extricates him from the bog represented by his ignorance, delusions and entrapments of the world. The Guru puts him of solid ground and shows him the path that would lead him to his destination. How can anyone with scruples ever be ungrateful to such a Guru who has given his doomed destiny new lease of life and salvaged his soul from the pit of darkness and endless miseries? It's a basic obligation on the part of the disciple, and a sign of decent and civilised behaviour that he pays due respect and recognition to the Guru.]

14-15. Keeping this acquired knowledge secret and concealed, one should approach an expert Guru wherever he is available and practice it diligently under his expert guidance (14-15).

[Note—The plausible reason for advising one to keep the knowledge secret is that if he advertises about it, people would flock to him and this would snatch him of his peace and serenity. He would be facing so many curious people who would treat him as a novelty that either he would be pumped-up with a false sense of importance and scholarship, or would end up with numerous self-declared expert advisors who would throw him in a tailspin of confusions and doubts with their own bit of 'expert advice' that they claim has proved very effective for them! The result would be catastrophic for the spiritual aspirant either way. So it is best to keep quiet and maintain a low profile.]

16. With the acquisition of success in the practice of Khechari Vidya, one acquires the mystical ability to float or fly in the sky. This Vidya should be practiced with the aid of the relevant Mantra called the 'Beej Mantra' or the basic formula for Khechari that can enable a practitioner to successfully float or fly in the sky (16).

[Note—It is having knowledge of the key secrets of this mystical ability that would empower the person to lift himself from the ground and float in the air. More contemporarily it is like learning the skill of flying and getting a practical hands-on experience of it under the guidance of an expert flying tutor before a man is able to take to the air on a glider or an air plane. If the flying student is not well trained or is not able to handle the entire routine of flying properly, he would crash land and die. In the field of Yoga it is a well established principle that if its practice is a giver of immense powers and authority on the one hand, it can be very dangerous and potentially devastating if not handled properly on the other hand. It can be injurious, and sometimes does more harm than good.

The Beej Mantras are like the key formulas that one must remember in order to solve complicated problems of science or mathematics. A flight engineer is expected to know his science of flying and the vehicle he is handling like the back of his hand when he is piloting an air plane or a space craft, for otherwise merely relying on the automatic flying software of the on-board computer would land him in serious trouble if some emergency occurs. He would not have the time to refer to manuals and text books when the plane is about to crash land.

In other words, the practitioner of Khechhari Vidya should have a thorough, not only 'adequate' knowledge of it before he endeavours to do it. Khechhari Yoga lifts the ascetic from the ground; he begins to levitate against the forces of gravity like a heavier-than-air plane lifting from the ground. So if he fails or is careless even for a moment, he would crash-land. This repeated failure would be de-moralizing for him. Lifting the body requires deep concentration and a sharp coordination between the body and the mind.

This is a metaphoric Melan or coordination or union between the gross body and the subtle mind. Once this initial Melan is achieved, the practitioner progresses to the next level where a coordination is brought about between the various units of the vital wind that supports life inside the body, such as the Pran also known as breath, and Apan which is the wind that moves in the lower part of the body. In the next step, the unified Pran wind obtains Melan or union or unification with the Atma or the consciousness that resides in the body. This Atma is his true self. Further ahead, this individual 'self' or Atma is brought in union with the cosmic Atma or cosmic 'Self' which is no other entity but the supreme transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm. In other words, the ultimate aim of Yoga in all its forms is to bring about a Melan between the individual's consciousness and the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness. This is the 'Truth' called the Shiva Tattva which is absolute and quintessential.

The idea of 'floating in the air' during practice of Khechhari is a metaphoric way of saying the soul has attained an exalted and lifted state of existence, that it has risen from a low plane of existence to a higher plane of existence. This means that a practitioner of Khechhari Yoga and Melan Mantra has lifted himself from a lowly life of delusions, ignorance and worldly involvements, has broken such fetters and has risen to an exalted level of enlightened living which is spiritually mature and liberating. Such a person becomes self-realised and Brahm-realised.]

17. [Verse nos. 17-20 describe the Beej Mantra for doing Khechhari Mudra of Yoga.]

A successful aspirant is able to become a leader of the Gods who roam in the sky; he obtains free access to the sky and can roam in it as he wishes¹.

Now, the primary Beej Mantra² of Khechhari is being described. The Sanskrit alphabet 'Ha' represents the 'Khechar' aspect of this Mantra. [That is, the seed letter 'Ha' of the Mantra is the esoteric formula which injects into the main Mantra the mystical power that would enable the person who has mastered this Mantra's use to be able to fly or float in the sky or space.]

Similarly, the alphabet 'Ee' (as pronounced in *eel*, *keen*, *feel*), which is the long vowel sound and the fourth vowel of the Sanskrit language, represents the Dharna. [That is, this alphabet 'Ee' represents a firm determination and unwavering resolution on the part of the aspirant for obtaining success in this knowledge and its implementation. It indicates his steadfastness of purpose and his ability to keep this Mantra in memory at all times during his sojourn in the sky. This is important, for should he forget it, he would fall back immediately. This is like an air plane pilot always remembering the intricate science of flying and running the air plane during flight, for otherwise it is impossible to

fly a huge plane and to meet emergencies should they occur. There is no time to consult books in flight; it would be absolutely incredulous even to think in this term! It is also like the jet engine of a plane which is revving up for take-off.]

The fire element is represented by the alphabet 'Ra', and the water element by the 'Anuswar' (the dot placed on the top of an alphabet to give it the nasal sound)³.

The combined effect is the creation of the mystically charged esoteric letter 'Hrim or Hring'. The seed/root monosyllable Mantra Hrim or Hring stands for the 'Shakti' element of creation. This represents the cosmic energy and divine powers of creation which regulates everything in existence. It is therefore used to invoke the divine energy and seek its intercession on the behalf of the aspirant who uses this Mantra for worship. (17).

[Note—¹An aspirant who practices Khechari Yoga in a holistic manner along with the relevant Mantra dedicated to it is deemed to be as exalted as the Gods. He is not subjected to any of the physical limitations and grossness experienced by ordinary creatures whose movements are limited by the principles of physics because they have a gross body with fixed dimensions, weight, contour, constituent parts etc. For instance, it is not possible for any human being to float in the air without any aid as is a normal practice for the Gods, but Khechari Yoga enables him to achieve this super-human and magical feat.

An ordinary creature's physical compulsion of having to be limited to the ground and his inability to lift himself up and float in the air is symbolic of the fact that he is eternally bound to this mundane world of material sense objects, trapped and shackled to it for life. He lacks the will and the wherewithal to break free from this fetter. Yoga empowers him; it provides him with the necessary conducive environment and the instrument which can enable him to do so—to break free from the fetters of the body as well as the world and find his ultimate liberation and deliverance. By being able to float in the air due to success in Khechari Yoga, the aspirant should understand its great spiritual import and significance. He must realise that it indicates he has risen above the ordinary and mundane, and instead has attained an exalted spiritual stature where liberation and deliverance is just round the corner.

There is another way of looking at Khechari Yoga and its potential powers to make its followers equivalent to the exalted Gods. There are five basic elements—viz. earth, water, fire, air and sky in this order of subtlety, with the earth being the least subtle and the most gross, and the sky being the most subtle and the least gross. The ordinary life of miseries and pains where the aspirant remains engrossed in this world, when he has not yet stepped on the path of Yoga symbolises this earth element. He is like an ordinary creature rooted to the earth and unable to break free from its shackles and find freedom or the ability to lift himself up from the quagmire in which he has landed. On the other extreme end is the sky element symbolised by his ability to float in the air which he achieves by doing Khechari Yoga.

The air element is very much like the sky element and only slightly less subtle as is evident from the fact that it is only the air element that is able to fill the entire space of the sky as compared to other three elements. So, when the aspirant is able to practice Pranayam which indicates his ability to control the air element, it is deemed that he has obtained full control over this element of creation.

The next hurdle is the control of the water element which is done by practicing the various Bandhas, especially the Jalandhar Bandha which indicates his ability to directly overcome the hurdles created by the water element.

The fiercest and the most untamable of the five elements is the fire element. This is done by controlling the Kundalini and harnessing its stupendous energy during Yoga as described in the present Upanishad.

With these controls in place it is more than clear that there is little to differentiate between the practitioner of Yoga and the Gods. Such a person is indeed no less powerful than the Gods. He is deemed to have acquired the powers and virtues possessed by the Gods.

²The *Beej* Mantras are also called the seed or root Mantras. The word Beej refers to the fundamental, essential, elementary part of the Mantra. They are monosyllables which encrypt all the divine, spiritual, mystical and eclectic powers, potentials and authority possessed by the patron deity for which that particular Beej Mantra is meant. These Beej Mantras are used in formal ritualistic worship, as during fire sacrifices, in occult forms of worship when worship instruments consisting of geometrical lines and figures, called the Yantra, are employed much like we have the circuit diagrams in an electronic instrument, as well as for doing Japa or constant repetition of a particular letter or word or phrase having divine and mystical qualities in order to invoke their powers and potentials for the benefit of the aspirant, and meditation and contemplation. These Beej Mantras are added as a prefix or suffix to the main Mantra to enhance and multiply its effects and potentials. For example, the root/seed/Beej Mantra 'Ra' stands for Lord Ram as well as the fire element. In other words, when it is used during a formal form of worship, it would boost the effect of the main Mantra of Lord Ram as well as subtly inject it with the stupendous and magnificent powers of 'fire'.

They are monosyllables and are much like the alphabets used in science and mathematical equations to denote other elements or factors. They encrypt great secret powers of creation in them, and must be pronounced and used properly even as the different alphabets standing for different atoms in organic chemistry must be properly placed at their designated places to make any sense out of them; otherwise the entire complex chemical compound represented by these monosyllable alphabets would be meaningless. Even in algebra, we use alphabets to denote certain things, and then go on calculating on the basis of these hypothetical assumptions to arrive at conclusive results. This system is used in all spheres of science. Therefore we conclude that the use of these 'Beej' Mantras during occult practices and ritualistic forms of worship to invoke divine powers and seek results is like the time tested scientific method applied in the sphere of metaphysics.

³The fire element would be like the heat produced by the combustion of the plane's fuel which powers the engine and enables the heavier-than-air machine to leave the earth and become air borne. The water element would be like the coolants used to cool down the engine and other parts of the plane and prevent their overheating. In the case of Yoga we can visualise their practical contribution in lifting a person's body from the ground as follows—

The Khechari Mudra is practiced not in isolation but in close coordination with other Mudras and Aasans (postures) of Yoga along with Bandhas (restrictions and closures of various apertures of the body), Pranayam (breath control), Shakti Chaalan and Kundali activation etc. as described earlier in Canto 1 of this Upanishad. All these activities generate heat in the body which in turn warms up the water content of the latter and creates subtle steam. Steam has immense power as is evident when it can turn turbines that generate electricity and move the piston of huge engines that power the steam locomotive or the ship on high seas. The same thing happens here though in a different way and at a different plane. The fire let loose by activation of the Kundalini not only provides heat to warm the body's fluid contents or its water element, but also the air element. Hot air is known to rise up as is seen in hot air balloons. The combined effect of

these two primary elements of Nature, water and air, getting heated is that the body is lifted from the ground much like the lifting of the hot air balloon. The Kundalini present at the lower end of the body provides the fire that keeps the air and water elements sufficiently hot and activated. Since all exit points of the body have been closed tight shut due to various Bandhas, Aasans, Mudras and Pranayam, the only option for heated air and the steam trapped inside the body is to lift the latter up.]

18-20. The Khechari Yoga is accomplished by using this Mantra. The next part of the Mantra is as follows—The Beej Mantra representing the Som or Moon is the alphabet ‘Sa’ (pronounced as in *sun* or *son*). Before this is the letter ‘Bha’ (pronounced as in *abhor*) which is the ninth alphabet of the Sanskrit consonant when counted backwards from ‘Sa’, and is followed by the letter ‘Ma’ (pronounced as in *mother*) which is the eighth letter from ‘Sa’ when counted backwards. This letter ‘Ma’ is followed by the letter ‘Pa’ (pronounced as in *punk*, *pun*, *Pundit*) which is the fifth consonant when counted backwards from the letter ‘Sa’. The letter ‘Pa’ is followed by the letter representing the Moon, i.e. the letter ‘Sa’ once again. The last letter in this sequence is ‘Ksha’ which is a combination of the letters ‘Ka’ (pronounced as in *kerb*, *kernel*) and ‘Cha’ (pronounced as in *champion*).

The resultant Mantra is the following—Hrim + Bha + Sa + Ma + Pa + Sa + Ksha = ‘Hrim Bhum Sum Mum Pum Sum Kshum’ (18-20).

[Note—The Mantras have the nasal sign ‘Anuswar’ which is represented by putting a ‘dot’ over each letter to represent the fact that they are empowered with cosmic divine powers. The Anuswar is also called the Bindu, a dot. This Bindu has great metaphysical significance as described in numerous Upanishads that deal with Yoga and Naad (the ethereal sound of creation). The concept of Naad and Bindu, called the ‘Naad Shakti’, has been explained at length in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 105, 167, 178; Canto 2, verse no. 6; Canto 3, verse nos. 2-3, 11; Canto 4, verse no. 47; Canto 5, verse no. 28; and Canto 6, verse nos. 21, 48-49, 71-73.

The relationship between the Bindu, Naad and the Mana (the mind) has been described in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 178, Canto 6, verse nos. 71-73.

The Anuswar sounds like ‘um’ in the word ‘*Rum*’, or like ‘ung’ as in ‘*Rung*’. Hence, the alphabet ‘Bha’ becomes ‘Bhum’ or ‘Bhung’, and so on and so forth.]

21-23. When one accepts this above Mantra from a wise and expert Guru and does meditation using it, i.e. repeats it with due diligence, sincerity and concentration, it is activated and becomes very potent and powerful. Then it is able to bestow upon him all types of mystical super-natural powers called Siddhis.

By doing Japa (repetition) of this Mantra twelve times a day, all sorts of Maya (delusions and ignorance pertaining to this artificial material world and the gross perishable body) cease to have any effect on the practitioner even in his dreams. [That is, when the mind and intellect are purified by the good effects of this Mantra, they would be fine tuned and enable the person to see through the dark veil of delusions that mislead him into believing as true things that are false and illusionary by nature. This Mantra acts as catalyst of change and enables the practitioner to rise higher from the muck of ignorance-induced worldly fantasies to the divine world of spiritual reality.]

An aspirant who does Japa of this Mantra for five Lakh times (1 Lakh = 1,00,000) while observing all the sanctioned rules and regulations meant for doing such a Japa, is

able to attain success in acquiring expertise in Khechhari. All the problems of his life are eliminated, and he obtains happiness and joys that are equivalent to those enjoyed by the exalted Gods (21-23).

24. The wrinkles of the body disappear as do the graying of hair. That is, even an old man becomes comparatively younger in his body than his actual physical age. This is why this Khechhari Vidya is called 'Maha Vidya' or the great knowledge. One should not doubt its efficacy, and therefore should endeavour to practice it with due diligence and firm faith (24).

25-26. Oh Brahmin (Gautam)! If due care and diligence is not shown while practicing this Khechhari Vidya, it would not yield any result and become potentially dangerous for the practitioner; he would have to suffer instead of benefiting from its practice. [Refer verse nos. 12-13 above of the present Canto 2.]

Even if total success is not achieved initially inspite of being careful and diligent and doing practice in a holistic manner, one should not be disheartened and dejected to an extent that he abandons Yoga midway, but have patience and show resilience by persisting with it under the guidance of an expert guide or teacher, for it ought to be noted here that without the regular help and guidance of an expert guide and teacher, success is difficult to obtain in this spiritual endeavour. The Mantra for Khechhari should be consistently and persistently repeated inspite of initial failures (for it is bound to show results sooner or later) (25-26).

27. If one is fortunate enough to have received the scripture pertaining to this knowledge of Khechhari (i.e. if one is lucky to come across the knowledge of this mystical practice in some ancient text or is able to locate an expert teacher of this subject who can explain its intricate details and give practical advise, which is a rare possibility because such wise persons are difficult to encounter), then he should practice this mystical form of meditation sincerely and with the greatest of diligence and faith.

In this way the practitioner is sure to achieve success in it and be blessed with the mystical powers that accompany this success in a natural way (27).

28. [The actual process of Khechhari is being narrated now from here onwards.]

To begin with, the aspirant should, under the expert guidance of a teacher, vigorously rubbing the rear end of the roof of the mouth cavity (i.e. the hind part of the palate) so that it is scrubbed and cleaned thoroughly (28).

29. Using an instrument which is as razor-sharp at the edges as the plant called 'Thuar' (the plant with the Latin name *Euphorbia nerifolia*; the cactus plant), the aspirant should make a very small incision in the muscular tissue that connects the tongue to the lower surface of the mouth cavity at its rear (29).

30. On this incision he should sprinkle a powder made of a mixture of rock salt/mineral salt and myrobalan (a herb) for seven consecutive days. Then another minute incision is made again deeper in the tongue (30).

31. By repeating this process continuously for six months (i.e. by making deeper incisions each time), the tongue is detached from the lower jaw (i.e. it is now freed from the muscular tissue that ties it to the lower surface of the mouth cavity) (31).

32-36. Then the tip of the tongue should be covered with a clean cloth and slowly elongated by regularly and persistently pulling it outwards by clasping its tip with the fingers and drawing it out in slow rhythmic to-and-fro movements of the hand.

Constant practice of this elongation process lengthens the tongue sufficiently enough to reach the area of the forehead between the two eyebrows, and if this process is persisted with, the tongue can be stretched to reach the two ears also. It would protrude out to reach the chin without much effort [33 ½].

If this practice is continued for three years without break, the tongue would be so long as to reach the hairs on the head. By this time, the tongue has been sufficiently lengthened so as to enable it to reach the shoulder blades on the side of the neck on the one hand and the Adam's apple in the throat on the other hand. [Naturally, if the tongue is made flexible and elongated enough so as to reach the shoulder blades, it would be easy for it to touch the Adam's apple which is closer at hand.]

If the practice of stretching the tongue is continued for another three years, it can reach the back of the neck and its base in the front.

By and by the tongue can be elongated sufficiently enough to go right up to the top of the head where the hair-like slit called the Brahm Randhra is located in the cranium and cover it. There is no doubt in it [34-36]. (32-36).

[Note—It would be evident by now why this Khechari is considered both rare and dangerous to practice. Besides this, it is a long haul process, requiring a lot of patience and resilience on the part of the practitioner. Pulling, flexing and stretching the tongue besides cutting it from its root in the way narrated herein above is of course not a child's joke under any circumstances. It can be very dangerous and fatal even.]

37-38. As has been observed, this elongation process enables the tongue to become elastic and stretchable. It can then be easily used to cover the Brahm Randhra and close it like a doorway (or like a cork on the mouth of a bottle). To do this along with the assiduous practice of doing Japa of the prescribed Beej Mantras for this form of Yoga systematically (as described in verse nos. 17-20) is obviously a very difficult proposition¹.

These Beej Mantras should be invoked properly and in a systematic way, i.e. the two basic rituals of 'Kar Nyas' and 'Anga Nyas'² must be painstakingly done to fully harness their mystical potentials. Otherwise, the results are not very encouraging; they might not even be worth the effort put in (37-38).

[Note—¹The elongation process of the tongue is already so stressful and painful, and when one is expected to concentrate upon the Mantras while doing so it becomes all the more impossible. Then the long time factor involved—a total of approximately twenty one long years, counting the 3 + 3 years required to sufficiently elongating the tongue as mentioned in verse nos. 32-36, another 3 years to tuck it inside the mouth as would be described below in verse nos. 39-42, and another 12 years as mentioned in verse no. 48 when the tongue is inverted and tucked inside the rear of the mouth cavity and the nostrils are vigorously rubbed by a stick while the eyesight is focused at the center of the eyebrows—would undoubtedly make it a very daunting and foreboding task. By simply visualizing a man being able to sustain the strain of this most formidable form of Yoga

for such a long period of time, observing its strict tenets and sitting in the grotesque and extraordinary postures for prolonged durations and not faltering in his resolve is indeed difficult to imagine. It not only seems a Herculean task but involves a lot of danger and hurdles.

²*Kar Nyas* and *Anga Nyas* of the 'Beej', i.e. the seed or root of the main Mantras, are the two basic rituals of invoking the divine powers of the Mantras which are basically mystical formulas employed in religious practice, specially during occult rites and meditation of which this Khechhari is a part. The word 'Kar' means hand, and 'Anga' means body, while 'Nyas' refers to an invocation, or vesting or assigning any entity with something, or entrusting an entity with some trust and responsibility; to deposit, repose, trust, pledge, entrust, to keep a thing in mind, etc. This is a ritualistic process in which certain parts of the body are touched and certain Mantras are said. It also means the purification of the individual parts of the body and the installation of the individual letter of the invoked Mantra, complete with its full potentials, at those points. Therefore, Nyas is a process of pledging utmost faith and conviction on the divine and holy Mantra's supernatural powers and potentials by invoking it and reposing it on the various locations of the body and its vital parts, such as the limbs, the abdomen and chest, the throat and forehead etc.

In the context of the Beej Mantras, it refers to invoking their divine cosmic powers and establishing them on various parts of the body, or assigning the patron Gods of these seed Mantras some specific part of the body so that they can establish themselves there.

Hence, doing Kar Nyas with the Beej Mantras would be to establish these symbolic Gods representing the cosmic, divine and mystical powers that are encrypted in the different Beej Mantras on the hand of the practitioner, while Anga Nyas would be to do the same on other parts of the body such as the chest, abdomen, shoulders, throat, forehead etc.]

39-41. This exercise should be done very gradually, with great patience, resilience and painstaking efforts; it cannot be rushed through. Done in a hurry or impatiently, it can be very hazardous for the body.

If the tongue is sufficiently long it would be possible to invert it with the help of the tip of fingers and tuck it into the opening at the back of the mouth where the rear of the palate opens into the wind pipe. This spot is called the 'Brahm Vivar'¹ (39-41).

[Note—¹The *Brahm Vivar* is literally a hole-like aperture present at the back of the mouth where it opens into the wind pipe which connects the lungs to the nose. This is the location of the 'Talu Chakra' or the swirling subtle energy center located at the rear of the palate. It has a direct link to the Brahm Randhra present in the cranium at the top of the head, and which is the hair-like slit marking the suture joint between the two parts of the skull.]

42. By constantly practicing this for three consecutive years with patience, the tongue can be made to enter the 'Brahm Dwar', literally the 'doorway to Brahm' which is another name for the Brahm Vivar (as described above in verse nos. 39-41).

Once the tongue enters this spot, the latter should be systematically rubbed by the former (42).

43. There are some practitioners of Yoga who have obtained success in Khechhari even without this rubbing of the Brahm Dwar/Brahm Vivar with the tongue, but only those who have previously attained expertise in systematically invoking the Mantra of

Khechhari can ever hope to do so. [In other words, only those who have mastered the art and skill of invoking the Mantras of Khechhari are exempt from going through this most arduous and difficult exercise of inverting the tongue and rubbing it against the back of the mouth and the rear of the palate. The plausible reason is that the Beej Mantras are made up of both vowels and consonants capped with the 'nasal sound' of Anuswar. See verse nos. 17-20. Constant practice of repeating these Mantras create vibrations that perhaps have the same scrubbing effect as obtained by the physical rubbing done with the help of the tongue.] (43).

44-46. Quick results are obtained by simultaneously doing Japa of the Mantra (i.e. to devotedly repeat the Mantra and use it as tool to do meditation with) and doing Manthan (literally the vigorous churning, or rubbing of something with another thing).

For the purpose of Manthan, a thin stick or rod made of iron, silver or gold is used. Its tip is wrapped in some tissue-cloth soaked in milk, and then it is inserted in the nostril while the practitioner sits in Sukha Aasan (the sitting posture which is comfortable for him), holds the Pran (breath) in the region of the heart (chest), and has focused his eyesight at a point midway between the two eyebrows. The inserted stick is then rubbed against the mucous lining of the nostril at its hind part where it opens into the wind pipe. This process is called Manthan.

If the process is done with perseverance for a period of six months, it begins to show results (44-46).

47-48. During this period, the state of the Yogi (the practicing ascetic) is like that of a sleeping child. It should be noted that this process of Manthan is to be done only once a month, and not daily [47].

The tongue should be repeatedly inserted into the Brahm Dwar on a regular basis (as described in verse no. 30-42). [That is, though the Manthan should be done only once a month, the insertion of the tongue into the back of the mouth cavity should be done on a daily basis. This restriction means that the main purpose of Manthan with a stick is to clean the clogged holes of the nostrils and scrub clean its mucous membranes like one cleans the tongue while brushing the teeth in the morning. It is also like a periodic cleaning of the household chimney or drain pipes so that all blockages are removed.]

If this process is done for a continuous period of twelve years then it is sure that the Yogi would get success in it, and consequentially attain mystical powers that accompany its successful completion (47-48).

49. At the successful culmination of this Yoga, the aspiring ascetic is able to have the divine vision of the entire creation in mirror of his inner self. [That is, he witnesses the presence of the cosmic Divinity inside his own bosom as the pure consciousness known as the Atma. Since whatever that truthfully exists is nothing but the Atma in its all-pervading and universal form as consciousness, when the ascetic sees this Atma he is deemed to be metaphorically witnessing the entire world in his own bosom.]

According to the philosophy of Yoga this is made possible because in the stage when the ascetic is successfully able to insert the tongue in the Brahm Dwar (verse no. 42) he would be able to taste the exhilarating nectar that provides eternal bliss and ecstasy as the divine subtle energy of the activated Kundalini is making its way up

through this region by passing through the Rajdanta or the Talu Chakra¹ on its way up to the Brahm Randhra (49).

[Note--¹The *Rajdant* is also called the 'Talu Chakra' as it is located at the rear of the palate and the back of the mouth where this opens into the wind pipe. It is closely related to the Kanth Chakra or the subtle energy center located at the pit of the throat. It is the route which leads to the so-called 10th door of Brahm which refers to the Brahm Randhra located at the top of the head. Earlier, Canto 1 has described in detail how the activated energy of the Kundalini accompanies the Pran or the vital winds present in the body as they move up the Sushumna Naadi during Pranayam and Kundalini activation to ultimate reach the forehead, and then proceed ahead to finally reach the top of the head in the region of the Brahm Randhra.

The Talu Chakra is like the tri-junction or the meeting point on the highway called the Sushumna Naadi that links the Kundalini located in the lower part of the body to the Brahm Randhra located at the top of the head. At the Talu Chakra, the inverted tongue can metaphorically 'taste' the elixir of bliss and ecstasy that drips from the surrounding tissues of the body when the aspirant experiences these eclectic sensations as his vital life forces represented by the Pran accompanied by the Kundalini Shakti are on their way up through the Sushumna Naadi. In practical terms it indicates that some sort of sweet fluid begins to effuse from the tissues of the brain when its nerves are titillated as the Pran rustles up the Sushumna Naadi towards the Brahm Randhra. This is why the practitioner of Khechari Yoga is said to experience first hand the bliss and ecstasy that comes with Brahm-realisation.]

Canto 3

[This Canto describes how the spiritual aspirant who follows the fundamental philosophy of Yoga—here emphasizing the importance of meditation and contemplation more than the physical exercises of Yoga—achieves the exalted state of self realisation and Brahm realisation. It was preached by Lord Shiva, the patron God of ascetics and Yoga, to Brahma the creator.]

1. Lord Padmaj (i.e. Brahma the creator, so-called as he was born sitting aloft a divine lotus that emerged from the navel of the Viraat Purush in his manifestation as Vishnu at the beginning of creation) said (to Lord Shiva)—'The Melan Mantra of Khechari is "Hrim Bhum Sum Mum Pum Sum Kshum"'. [Refer Canto 2, verse nos. 5 and 17-20 for detail.]

Oh Shiva! Please tell me what is the significance of the three cardinal days of Amaavasya (the day of the dark moon), Pratipada (the first day of each half of the lunar month), and Purnamaasi (the day of the full moon) as described in relation to this Melan Mantra' (1).

2. [Lord Shiva replied--] 'These three days are symbolic representations of the three phases through which the spiritual aspirant passes in his journey of self-realisation and discovery of the pure consciousness residing in his own self with all its divine glory and brilliant splendour.

Hence, the dark moon night/day stands for the first phase of his existence and intellectual vision which is veiled by the dark shadow of spiritual ignorance just like the darkness that covers the bright disc of the moon and prevents its glorious shine from being visible and giving any light.

The second phase is the night/day just after this dark moon. It signifies the emergence of the first ray of hope and the first light of enlightenment and self-realisation that emerges out from behind this dark veil of total ignorance and falsehoods as soon as one starts his trek of discovery of the Truth and the pure Consciousness residing in his bosom, and which is nothing but his true divine 'self'.

The final phase of the full moon is the metaphoric depiction of the successful culmination of his spiritual journey when he has discovered his true self and the brilliant splendour of his self-illuminated consciousness that removes all the causes of his spiritual delusions. This is the most auspicious state of existence for him. It marks the pinnacle of his spiritual journey when he becomes self-realised and Brahm-realised. His glory and divinity shines like the disc of the full moon; his enlightenment and spiritual fulfillment are complete and untainted. The world basks in his spiritual illumination, the light that emanates from his divine 'self', the exalted pure conscious Atma, much like it does in the moon's soothing light. His mere presence is enough to spread peace and happiness all around much like the mere presence of the moon fills the entire sky with its nectar like moonlight (2).

3. When a man runs behind the sense objects of the material world with a great desire and longing for them, these desires and longings go on increasing exponentially instead of being satisfied and getting abated and calmed down¹. There is no end to this pursuit (because it is like running behind a mirage in a desert—the further the man runs, the more the world and its artificial attractions retreat from him, baiting him to come hither to nowhere!).

Therefore, it is only by distancing oneself from both the sense objects of this material world and the desire, the greed and the lust for them that one can ever hope to obtain something that is truthful and eternal, that is faultless, taintless and without any of the shortcomings that are the hallmarks of everything in the world that the man seeks so assiduously out of his ignorance of the truth and reality² (3).

[Note--¹The reason is the man cannot obtain sufficient amount of satisfaction from this urge for sense gratification, as the objects of sense gratification are infinite, and the comforts and pleasures that they offer are equally infinite. Besides this point, the fact is that these material objects of the world are like the mirage seen in a desert—i.e. not only is it false but it runs further away from the man just at the time when he thinks that it is within his reach. So he continues to fruitlessly pursue the world eternally for the entire span of his lifetime without actually getting any worthwhile results from his efforts. This leaves him frustrated, distressed, weary and dismayed, which cause endless agitation and restlessness for his soul. It's like trying to catch hold of the sky with one's hand, which is an impossible proposition, or like attempting to grab the moon by catching hold of its image as seen in a mirror or pot full of water. As soon as the fingers touch the surface of the water, the entire moon vanishes, only to come back when the surface of the water become smooth and static to tease the person to try again.

²That is, only by relinquishing one's desires for sense gratification and for obtaining the material objects of the world that pepper him ceaselessly with colorful promises of giving him unimaginable charms and pleasures can a man ever hope to find real and

eternal peace and tranquility. As long as the mind is distracted by the world which keeps it firmly shackled by its charms, thereby keeping the man enthralled and ensnared in shackles called Maya which are delusions arising out of ignorance of the reality, it is impossible for the mind to focus on something else. It is like the case of the flame of a candle flickering widely in a gust of wind, where the wind would stand for the various desires for this world and the flame would represent the mind. Only when the surge of uncountable worldly desires are eliminated from the landscape of the mind by training the latter wisely that one can get rid of the world and its shackling effect inspite of living in it and surrounded by its material sense objects. The key to overcome Maya is the key to obtain spiritual liberation and deliverance, and it is to distance one's self from the world and its numerous illusions and deceptive charms. Dispassion, detachment, renunciation, non-involvement and indifference are some of the important tools to achieve this noble spiritual end.]

4. A wise person who wants his own spiritual good should abandon his involvement with the sense organs as well as with the material world of sense objects permanently. Instead, he should focus his attention on the cosmic Shakti (i.e. the divine energy of the pure consciousness) residing in his own self (as his pure conscious Atma). He should become steadfast in this and be firmly focused on this fount of divine Shakti (4).

5. To examine the working of the mind with its internal in-built checking mechanism called the intellect, and using this intellect to analyse its functioning and seeing where it has erred, and then freeing oneself from the mind's wayward activities and tendencies is called 'Param Pada'. That is, freeing one's self from being hostage to the mind and its nefarious designs and pitiful state of worldly indulgences, to free one's self from remaining engulfed in ignorance and submerged in delusions created by the mind is tantamount to attaining the exalted spiritual state of wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and self-realisation, which is the supreme state of conscious existence called 'Param Pada'.

It is an established principle that it is the mind that is the root which creates this delusory world, while at the same time it is the same mind that is the point source or 'Bindu' from where the wellspring of wisdom, erudition, sagacity and enlightenment springs forth. It is the mind that can cause all sorts of delusions for the creature and make him believe that something that is inherently false and misleading is true and real, while it is the same mind which when properly trained and guided can lead him to the auspicious path of greatness as well as spiritual liberation and deliverance (5).

[Note—This verse essentially describes how the Mana or the mind can be a source of both entanglements with the world as well as the source of liberation and deliverance from it. The most important component of a creature's body is his brain. It is the level of development of the brain that determines in which rung of evolutionary hierarchy the creature stands. The brain has two components—the grosser mind and the subtler intellect. The mind is always in a state of flux, remaining undecided and running hither and thither like a mischievous child let loose in a toy shop, while the intellect is marked by stability and is like a wise adult who knows what to do and what to choose. When the child (here referring to the mind) is put under the care of his parent (here referring to the adult intellect), it would have a proper upbringing, would be disciplined, well behaved and well trained. This child would not commit some grave error because he has been trained to be alert and think before acting, while an uncared child would be a nuisance for the society. Likewise, the mind, when it is under the supervision and guidance of the

intellect, is under leash, and such a mind can be very productive for the man just like a properly raised child can give a lot to the world and the society when he grows up.]

6. Just like clarified butter is created from milk, the Bindu (the point-source of enlightenment leading to self-realisation) springs forth from the mind. Hence, whatever faults and shortcomings there are in the mind are restricted to it and they do not taint the Bindu¹ (6).

[Note--¹Butter is produced by churning milk, and only the best creamy part of milk floats on top and removed as butter, while all the impurities and adulterations in milk are left behind. Similarly, the wisdom and enlightenment that is produced is very refined and unpolluted as compared to the mind from which it has emerged. Another illustration would be the lotus flower. It emerges from the dirty pond but remains unaffected by the latter's pollutions.]

7. The Shakti (i.e. the life-giving energy of breath) that flows through the two Naadis called Surya and Chandra (i.e. the right and left nostrils respectively) has a limiting effect on the creature. So in order to obtain freedom from this artificial limitation imposed upon the inherently unlimited and eternal consciousness which is the true self and identity of the creature, attempt should be made by a wise aspirant to establish this Shakti (the cosmic energy that infuses life in an otherwise inert and inane gross body and miraculously transforms it into a living being) in the channel which runs between these two—i.e. in the Sushumna Naadi¹.

When this Shakti moves through this central channel (i.e. the Sushumna Naadi) it can pierce through all the obstacles (represented by the different Granthis as explained in Canto 1, verse nos. 67-68) on the way and reach the citadel from where the expert aspirant can break himself free from all the fetters tying him down to this body and the world to obtain final liberation and deliverance as and when he so wishes².

So, assiduous attempts should be made to painstakingly divert the Pran (the vital life sustaining winds in the body which help the consciousness to keep the body alive) into this Sushumna Naadi to give the creature his much-wanted freedom and deliverance from the shackles of the gross body and the world in which this body is bound to live, instead of merely keeping the Pran moving through the nostrils because this would only help to keep the gross body alive, and with it to keep all the shackles intact³ (7).

[Note—¹This is because he lives only as long as the breath flows through these two nostrils. Otherwise he would suffocate to death. In other words, his life and existence becomes dependent upon the breath that flows in and out through the nostrils. This breath, called the 'Pran', never finds rest or liberation because as soon as it is exhaled or manages to slip out of the body to freedom in the outer atmosphere, it is immediately pulled back in as inhaled breath. The man becomes so restless and suffocative that he gives no second thoughts in pulling the Pran right back in as soon as it leaves the body as exhalation. But this does not end here. Once inside, the restlessness continues as the Pran finds itself trapped and suffocated in a sac-like body, a state which is not in the nature of wind element as it likes to be eternally free and unfettered. So it tries to go out immediately, and the man has to breathe it out as exhalation. This oscillation of the Pran is symbolic of the man's continuous cycle of birth and death, with the inhalation standing for birth because it infuses life in the body, and exhalation for death because at the time of death the vital wind leaves the body and renders it lifeless. Thus, the man never finds true liberation and deliverance as long as his Pran continue to move in the nostrils.

On the other hand, if this same Pran is diverted and made to travel through the channel of the Sushumna Naadi, it can finally and permanently escape from the Brahm Randhra in the last stages of Yoga, thereby providing the spiritual aspirant his final liberation and deliverance which is called Mukti in metaphysical parlance. Since this is a one-way exit of the Pran, it provides him with Moksha or final emancipation and salvation. He no longer would have to re-enter the body, which translates into his not having to take any birth in the future.

The way the Pran exits from the body by these two methods—viz. one, by the normal breathing process wherein it flows in and out of the nostrils, and two, by the movement through the Sushumna Naadi as done by Yoga techniques, it would be clear for the spiritual aspirant that if he sincerely wishes to obtain Mukti or Moksha then he should aim at moving his Pran through the Sushumna Naadi instead of the nostrils. In other words, he should diligently practice Yoga as described in this Upanishad with a lot of patience and commitment on his part.

²This refers to the subtle cosmic energy of the Kundalini accompanied by the vital life-consciousness symbolised by the vital winds collectively called the Pran reaching the forehead where the ascetic can experience the bliss obtained when he becomes aware of the presence of pure consciousness residing inside his own self. The irony is that this consciousness was always present in his bosom as his Atma but it could not be experienced by him because the faculty of the brain which would actually do so was previously too pre-occupied with the passage of breath through the nostrils and the numerous sensory perceptions of the world that it received through the medium of the sense organs of perception present in the body and responding to them that it had little energy and time for other things.

But now when the aspirant has decided that enough is enough, that he no longer wishes to be charmed by false things of the world or enjoy its material sense objects that are however transient and perishable and never give true happiness and peace, but would rather seek things that give him eternal, true and real happiness and peace, things that have an enduring spiritual value, he begins to distance himself from the artificial world and its material objects. He trains his body and mind to get detached from them and treat them as traps, and instead strive for nobler issues in life which would enable him to taste the nectar of eternity, bliss and contentedness.

With the mind-intellect freed from its overburdened task of dealing with the ever-changing world, it can now concentrate upon the spiritual dimensions of existence. Being freed from the grosser aspects of existence, it now has the time and the energy to think and deal with the sublime and subtler things of life. It is only when the grosser part of life is eliminated that one can experience the subtle things. For instance, when hard rock music is blaring in the background, it is impossible for anyone to enjoy the soothing effects of classical instrumental music or some Sufi songs.

This spiritually exalted and enlightened state empowers him with the third eye of wisdom, so-called because now he has become spiritually enlightened and is able to see things in their non-visible aspect which is beyond their mere physical form. That is, he gets a transcendental vision. Further on, this Shakti reaches the Brahm Randhra and can empower the Pran (the life-infusing vital winds of the body) to escape through it should the ascetic wish to leave his gross body and obtain what is called 'Videha Mukti', or liberation of the soul from the fetters of the gross body.

³Moving the Pran or breath through the nostrils would ensure that the gross body does not die, but that would also entail continued sufferance from the numerous problems that the creature endures because of this gross body. Once the Pran abandons its movement through the nostrils and instead moves up through the Sushumna Naadi, it would be a one-way movement that would take the creature to the citadel of 'spiritual

high’—i.e. the exhilarating feeling of spiritual awareness and its attendant bliss and ecstasy. Merely moving the winds through the nostrils, i.e. merely breathing through the nose, would be literally frittering away the stupendous abilities of the vital winds that can enable the Atma to obtain final liberation and deliverance from the fetters of this gross body and equally gross world. This is only possible when the Pran moves up the Sushumna Naadi.]

8. The Pran (i.e. the consciousness that injects life into the body and which is manifested in the form of the life-infusing divine mystical powers inherent in the vital winds of the body) should be focused in the ‘Bindu’ (literally the ‘dot’; here referring to the point in the forehead between the two eyebrows which is called the Agya Chakra). Simultaneously, the Vayu (i.e. the physical winds that move inside the body as breath and flatulence) should be controlled in the nostrils (by the process of Pranayam). [This combined effort helps the aspirant to achieve the spiritual high of experiencing bliss and ecstasy that comes with becoming aware of the stupendous fount of these virtues present in one’s bosom as the pure consciousness.]

The three aspects of this creation—viz. the Bindu (symbolising the single point from which the entire creation has emerged, i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness), the consciousness residing in the bosom of the creature as his truthful Atma (which is his true ‘self’) and the Prakriti (which is the Nature at the macrocosmic level of creation and a creature’s individual nature and inherent temperament at the microcosmic level of existence)—are actually an extension of this Pran Vayu. So, as soon as the Pran Vayu ceases to exist, the world also ceases to matter for the aspirant¹ (8).

[Note--¹That is, it is only as long as the vital winds that sustain life in the gross body keep the latter alive that the creature relates to the world, and the world has any meaning for him. As soon as this Pran Vayu leaves the body and the latter dies, the world ceases to matter or exist for all practical purposes as far as the creature is concerned. In this scenario, the ‘creature’ would be some entity different from the body. What or who is it then? The answer is ‘the Atma or pure consciousness’—it is the truthful identity of the creature. How does this Atma interact with the world, or how does the creature become aware of the world? The answer is ‘through the medium of the body and its sense organs as well as its mind and intellect’. The body is kept alive by the Pran Vayu, hence the existence of the world is only till the time the Pran Vayu lives in the body and keeps it alive. This happens till the time the creature breathes. And therefore, when this Pran Vayu stops moving through the nostrils and instead moves along the Sushumna Naadi to reach the point in the forehead where the extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy is experienced by the aspirant, the breathing stops automatically because this diversion of the Pran Vayu is possible only when it is stopped from moving through the nostrils and instead diverted to the Sushumna Naadi. When this happens, the world would also stop to exist for the sensory perceptions of the body as the mind would be engrossed in enjoying the bliss and ecstasy obtained at this juncture.]

9-11. The spiritual aspirant should learn about the six Chakras of the body¹ and then find rest (i.e. fix his attention and the energy of the Pran and consciousness) in the Chakra which gives him extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy (i.e. the Sahasraar Chakra).

The six Chakras are the following—Mooladhar, Swadhisthan, Manipur, Anaahat, Vishudha and Agya [9 ½].

The Mooladhar is situated near the anus, the Swadhisthan near the genital, the Manipur in the area around the navel, the Anaahat in the heart region, the Vishudha in the pit of the throat, and the Agya in the forehead [11]. (9-11).

[Note—¹The *Chakras*, according to the Tantra philosophy, are swirling energy centers of the body, and they are shaped like lotus flowers having varying number of petals. Refer also to Canto 1, note of verse nos. 85-86.

The Chakras have been described in detail in other Upanishads as well, notably the Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad, Canto 3 of Rig Veda tradition, Dhyanbindu Upanishad, verse nos. 44-49 and Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 168-178 as well as Canto 5, verse nos. 5-15 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, as well as Yograjo-panishad, Yogchudamani Upanishad, and Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4 of the Sam Veda tradition.]

12. Having acquired the knowledge of these six Chakras, the aspirant should first focus on concentrating the Vayu (i.e. the Pran winds; the vital wind forces in the body which keep the body alive) one by one on these, raising it from the lower level to the next higher level until it reaches the Sahasraar Chakra where the extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy is witnessed by him. But this is not the goal. He should divert it still ahead and push it upwards into the head (so that ultimately it reaches the top of the head to enter the Brahm Randhra Chakra¹) (12).

[Note—¹The concept of how the ascetic is able to obtain final Mukti or liberation and deliverance when his Pran or vital life-bearing winds representing consciousness reaches the Brahm Randhra have been elaborately explained elsewhere in Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 27, and Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 18-20 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

13-17. By this practice, the Pran gets established in the symbolic universe located at the top of the head¹. In other words, the spiritual aspirant gains knowledge of everything worth knowing in this world. He virtually sees the world from a high ground and thus have a broad and panoramic view of existence.

In this holistic manner, the ascetic is able to have knowledge of and become enlightened about all the vital factors of life present in his body which is treated as a miniature universe—i.e. he acquires knowledge of and gets acquainted with such potentially powerful aspects of the universe as Vayu (the various vital winds and their functions and how to harness their potential powers), the Bindu (literally the ‘drop’ and ‘point’, here referring to his vital forces of life and inherent strength that is represented by the drop of semen which he becomes able to self-control as well as the drop of blood and lymph and other important fluids in the body, and also to the point in the forehead where he experiences the exhilarating sense of extreme bliss and ecstasy when the Pran reaches this point during meditation), the Chakras (the swirling dynamic energy centers of his body which were hitherto clogged and unable to release their divine energies but which now have been opened up, empowering the aspirant with stupendous energy and powers), and the Chitta (the subtle aspect of the mind, the sub-conscious mind and its astounding abilities and powers).

This metaphorically makes the ascetic aware of the supreme Authority and the universal cosmic power that regulates the entire universe, and this eclectic knowledge fills him with the ecstasy and a sense of fulfillment that comes with the knowledge of the ‘Supreme’ and being acquainted first hand with the ‘Lord’ of creation. [After all,

this is the ultimate aim of all spiritual endeavours—to become acquainted with the supreme Brahm. So, when the ascetic is able to achieve this exalted stage of enlightenment, he indeed becomes Brahm-realised.]

This is the culmination of Yoga—aimed to bring about a union between the individual and the Supreme Being. This is called the state of Samadhi wherein the ascetic tastes the nectar-like bliss of truth realisation and self-realisation [13 ½].

Just like the case wherein the fire inherent in the firewood cannot be brought to light without rubbing the latter vigorously, the astounding potentials and magnificent powers of Yoga cannot be demonstrated without stringent and painstaking effort and practice [14 ½].

Even as a lighted lamp covered by a clay pot cannot show its light unless the pot is broken, the brilliant light of enlightenment and self-realisation that emanates from the knowledge that the ascetic acquires of the supreme Truth of creation known as the cosmic Consciousness when he has successfully completed his Yoga practice and has experienced its attendant bliss and ecstasy that is likened to dripping nectar called Amrit inside his own self (as his pure conscious Atma) cannot be brought to light unless the covering in the form of the pot-like gross body is done away with². This is possible with the help of and guidance from a wise and self-realised Guru (who is a moral preceptor and an expert Yoga teacher himself) [16 ½].

The Guru is like a ‘Karnadhaar’, i.e. a helmsman or a boatman³, who can take a man across this world which is like a deep sea that is choppy and awe inspiring [17]. (13-17).

[Note--¹Obviously, the skull and its inside do resemble the inverted ‘hemisphere of the sky’ under which the entire universe is located. The brain is also located here, and the latter is the center of knowledge and wisdom without which life would be as good as non-existent. The grosser part of this brain, the tissues etc. are like the lifeless parts of this universe such as lifeless plants, asteroids, rocks and mountains etc., while its subtle part, the thinking and intellectual part—i.e. the mind and intellect, are like ‘life’ personified. ‘Life’ does not simply mean living like an animal, but living a fruitful life of intelligent and auspicious living which is only made possible by the use of intelligent aspect of the mind which can analyse and determine what is good, noble, auspicious, righteous and correct, and what is not. Even an ordinary animal has brain, but what distinguishes it from a human being is the latter’s ability to think rationally and intelligently, to determine and choose between options, to be able to differentiate between the good and the bad, between the gross and the sublime. This intellectual and wise aspect of the mind forms the subtle, the most important and useful part of the brain.

²The body is a gross thing much like the clay pot, while the consciousness residing in it is like the lighted lamp burning inside the pot. That is why consciousness is often called ‘self-illuminated’ because it gives light. In the present context, the ‘getting rid of the body’ has two connotations—one is to actually leave the body which the ascetic accomplishes by doing Yoga and forcing his Pran to make its exit from the Brahm Randhra at the culmination of Yoga, while the second meaning would be to disassociate and detach himself from the physical gross body and realise that his true self is the pure consciousness that is an ethereal Spirit. This Spirit is like the wind or air element that is not limited like the body, and is free from all the encumbrances associated with the gross body. Further, when the ascetic de-links himself from the body, he is not at all affected by the grossness, limitations and faults associated with the latter. This is what is meant here. A truly self-realised and acclaimed ascetic would rise above the grossness and

limiting effects of the body, and instead become universal and ethereal like the Spirit that is his Atma.

³The word *Karnadhaar* literally means a helmsman, but here the meaning 'a boatman' is more apt because he is supposed to take his ward, the spiritual aspirant, across a 'sea' represented by this world. Only an expert boatman can do this.]

18-19. This ocean-like world called the Bhavsagar can be crossed only on the strength and powers that come to a spiritual aspirant with constant practice of Yoga (meditation and contemplation on the Truth) and inculcating noble, auspicious and righteous virtues called 'good Vasanas'.

Enlightenment and realisation sprouts in the creature like a divine flower that first emerges as an un-opened bud, then its two or more sepals unfold to reveal the petals which then follow suit and open out to make the flower bloom in its full glory and magnificence. This is the metaphor for the culmination of Yoga and self-realisation in a graded and step-by-step way that is natural but time consuming.

It is also like the faculty of speech ('Vaikhari') which has its secret origin in the thoughts of the man, then these thoughts are given words which can be likened to the sepals of the unfolding flower, followed by the actual process of speaking when the thought is made public which is like the blossoming of this symbolic flower. When the speaking is complete, when the man has completed the task of expressing himself, the speech rests and the man becomes quiet which is a metaphoric way of saying that all the aspirations and desires of the ascetic, which had made him undertake the rigours of Yoga in the first place, are fully satisfied when he experiences the extreme state of bliss and ecstasy that comes with self-realisation, and it is then that he becomes rested, contented, calm and steady (i.e. he reaches the stage of Samadhi which is a trance-like state obtained in the higher stages of Yoga; refer verse no. 13 ½ above of this present Canto 3) (18-19).

20-23. When the spiritual aspirant who has developed this wisdom of thought that the supreme entity that empowers the faculty of speech to speak is the supreme transcendental Lord (Brahm) residing in his own bosom as his true self (as pure conscious Atma), he would behave accordingly. So, when someone speaks ill of him, or speaks to him with words that are rough, insulting and generally unwarranted, or on the contrary even speaks good of him and say comforting nice words to him, he would remain steady, composed and calm with stoic equanimity in both the cases. He would not at all be affected either by the uncalled for words and insinuations and lose his poise and calm, nor would he feel elated and proud at being praised and spoken good of. In both the cases he would remain completely indifferent to, unruffled by and unconcerned with what is being said. [This is because he knows that the Lord is speaking to him—scolding him for his wrongs, errors and shortcomings, or testing his patience, resilience and resolve, or lauding him for his goodness and virtuousness. So he must accept everything with great humility, for therein lies his greatness and proof of his exalted and enlightened state of existence.] [20 ½].

The creation at the microcosmic level of the individual creature is said to be of three kinds—viz. Vishwa, Taijas and Pragma¹. The same creation at the macrocosmic level of the universe is said to be also of three kinds—viz. Viraat, Hiranyagarbha and

Ishwar². The created world, i.e. the gross world, is similarly of three kinds—viz. Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha³ [22].

All the various aspects of creation have unfolded from one basic source (the Bindu)⁴, and when the time comes for conclusion and folding up of the world, they would naturally revert to their original and basic form from which they had sprouted in the beginning. [This single source is the supreme entity known as Brahm.] That is, when things are seen in the correct perspective and analysed with intelligent application of the mind, all extraneous appearances vanish and only the basic oneness of the entire edifice of creation is visible. In other words, when the world comes to a conclusion, it would merge and become indistinguishable from the egg-like primordial source from which it had emerged [23]. (20-23).

[Note—¹The *Vishwa* refers to the gross body of the creature, i.e. his sense organs of perception and action which makes him aware of the external material and artificial world during his waking state; the *Taijas* refers to the subtle body of the creature, i.e. the mind-intellect complex that is active in his dreaming state of consciousness when the external physical world has ceased to exist but the mind still conjures up a colourful picture of the world in the dream and keeps itself as well the consciousness as active in it as in the physical world; and *Pragya* is causal body of the creature, i.e. the deep sleep state of consciousness when the mind has also ceased to exist.

²Similarly, the three levels of existence at the macro level of creation are called respectively Viraat, Hiranyagarbha and Ishwar. The word *Viraat* refers to the gross body of the cosmic consciousness that is vast and all-incorporating ('Viraat') and forms the sum total of all the gross bodies that exist at the micro level of creation; the *Hiranyagarbha*, literally the golden egg of the creation, refers to the subtle body of this Viraat from which the latter has emerged; and *Ishwar* is the macro level counterpart of the causal body of the creature, i.e. it represents the causal body of the Viraat and the sum total of all the causal bodies in creation.

Since the 'body' must have some living entity residing in it, it follows that this 'someone' or 'some living entity' is different from the body and it uses the body merely as its habitat or dwelling. This 'living entity' is known as the supreme transcendental consciousness called the Atma of the individual at the micro level of creation, and Brahm at the macro level. It is 'transcendental' because it goes beyond the limitations and definitions of the gross or subtle body. Since Brahm is the 'cause' of the entire creation coming into being, the inner chamber of the body where it lives is called 'causal'—one that causes something to happen. The counterpart of Brahm in the creature's body is the Atma. It is called 'consciousness' simply because it is the only truly living entity in the otherwise entirely inert and inane gross body made up of different elements which are themselves lifeless and lack any inherent consciousness in them besides being perishable and comparatively gross as compared to the pure Consciousness. Since the living being shows all signs of life and consciousness, since it has emotions and feelings, it is more akin to this Atma than it is to the gross inert body. This fact is acknowledged when the scriptures assert and affirm that the true nature and identity of the creature is the Atma and not the body in which this Atma lives.

Taking the example of this material world, physical science tells us that everything has a visible structure that depends upon molecules which themselves are formed by arrangement of atoms in different permutations and combinations. The atoms also have a world of their own, with the electrons circulating the central nucleus consisting of the protons and the neutrons. When we apply this theory to metaphysical understanding of creation, we can draw a parallel and deduce that the visible physical world is the gross body of Brahm, the molecules are the subtle body, and the atom is the causal body. The

nucleus of the atom without which the atom—and therefore the entire edifice of the material world dependent upon this atom—would cease to have an existence is the Brahm of Vedanta. This would be the macrocosmic view of creation. Its microcosmic partner would be the atom itself—with its rounded structure being the gross body, the component of the electrons, neutrons and protons etc. being its subtle body, while the nucleus itself would be causal body which houses the neutrons, protons and other sub-atomic forces that regulate the functioning of the edifice of the atom as a whole.

³The seeds of the three worlds that would come into existence were encrypted in the three words that the creator Brahma had pronounced at the time of creation. They were—‘Bhu’ from which was created the mortal world represented by earth and its inhabitants, ‘Bhuvaha’ from which the space above the earth was created, i.e. the world of the sky where birds as well as Spirits etc. would live, and ‘Swaha’ represented the heavens where the Gods would have their abode. Therefore, these three words are the seeds from which the huge tree of this creation came into existence.

In the context of what has been said in note 1 and 2 above, the Bhu would correspond to the gross body of creation, Bhuvaha to the subtle body, and Swaha to the causal body, while the supreme Brahm would be the one who pronounced these words to initiate the process in the beginning.

⁴This phenomenon can be best understood with the example of the huge tree with numerous big and small branches with their leaves, multicolored flowers, succulent fruits and hordes of birds, insects et al that find their temporary perch or permanent abode on it. The entire tree has had its origin in one single seed that is minuscule as compared to the size of the tree. This seed is like the ‘Brahmaand’ or universe in a miniature form, while the tree itself is the unfolded universe with its astounding variety and an astonishing array of multifaceted characteristics. When someone wishes to know the fundamental truth about the origin of this colourful tree, he would obviously come to conclusion that it is the seed. Similarly, when one goes deeper and deeper and sees the basic unit from which this edifice called the universe has emerged he would finally come to the conclusion that it is the microscopic Atma known as cosmic consciousness or Brahm. This is essentially the philosophy of the non-dual nature of the creation and the basis of Vedantic canons.

We can take another example to understand this phenomenon of the world having its origin in one single source—the ‘dot’, the Bindu, and then extending to reveal itself in its full bloom and vibrancy, and finally retracing itself back into the dot or the ‘self’ from where it had started out in the beginning on its journey of adventure should it wish to find its place of origin. Suppose one wishes to draw a line on a paper. The first point where the pen touches the paper is the metaphoric ‘dot’ or Bindu, and this is then stretched to become a line of whatever length one wishes. Can anyone draw a line without first making a dot? So it is safely deduced that the line is actually an extension of the single dot or Bindu, that the line consists of uncountable number of dots that add up to appear in the form of the line, and that the dot or Bindu is the parent-source of the entire line. When this ‘stretched dot’ known as the line ever wishes to retrace its step and find its source of origin, it is obvious that it would come back to the point called the dot which was made when the tip of the pen had first touched the paper. Similarly, if the line wishes to know its true nature it would discover that it is nothing but a series of dots.

Every modern man who has encountered the computer with its astounding and stupendous abilities knows the basic fact that the machine works on a series of zeros and ones; it knows no other language except the zero and the digit one. Likewise, a wise and enlightened man knows nothing else except the Atma and Brahm. The entire edifice of creation revolves around these two units as far he is concerned. But does this mean that there is duality? No, never, for he learns that the Atma and Brahm are the same entities at

different planes of existence, the former at the micro level of existence and the latter at the macro level of existence.]

24. When the spiritual aspirant reaches this exalted and most divine state of existence of self-realisation which is tantamount to Brahm-realisation, all distinctions between his independent existence as a man and the universal nature of the Atma that transcends all physical boundaries created by the gross body are erased for ever, and consequentially he becomes one with the universal and all-pervading Consciousness known as the supreme Atma or Soul. In other words, he loses his independent and separated existence and merges with the universal Atma that has no separate and alienable existence. He becomes a personified Brahm himself.

It is such a mysterious state and form that defies definition—it cannot be said to have any light, and at the same time it cannot be said that it has no light. [The Atma is said to be ‘self-illuminated’, but can anyone physically ‘see’ this light? The answer is ‘no’. But not being able to see this light does not imply that there is no light in the Atma because otherwise a self-realised man would not have the so-called ‘light of wisdom and enlightenment’ that is so unique to him. Drawing an example from the physical world and cited in verse no. 15-16 above and verse no. 25 below, the fact that one cannot see the light of the lamp burning inside the clay pot as long as the lamp is covered by this pot does not mean that the lamp is not burning. Another instance would be the firewood cited in verse no. 14 ½ of this Canto 3 above. The fire element is always and intrinsically present in the firewood, and this is the reason that this wood has the word ‘fire’ prefixed to it. But can anyone see the latent fire present inside this wood? Since the fire is not actually visible, does it mean that it is not there in the firewood?] (24).

25. In this supreme state of enlightenment, only the realisation of the Truth prevails. This Truth has no particular name or form; it cannot be delineated and defined, and its one of its kind in existence. It is indistinguishable from this creation though it remains invisible. The aspirant should visualise his self-illuminated Atma residing in his own bosom as the lighted lamp inside the clay pot—hidden from view but nevertheless giving out a subtle light that emanates from it and radiates out in every direction. [Refer verse no. 16 ½ of this Canto 3.] (25).

26. This exalted Atma is symbolically like the wick of a lighted lamp which has a flame the size of a thumb. Its light is bright and without any smoke. It is illumination and brightness personified. It is eternal, infinite, imperishable and truthful. The spiritual aspirant should always remember and concentrate his attention on this Atma resident in his bosom (26).

27-28. Essentially the Atma is inherently wise and enlightened, but when it assumes a gross body to live in, it comes under the corrupting and tainting influence of Maya (ignorance-induced delusions). Consequentially, this Atma begins to imagine that it has the three states of existence in this world—the Jagrat (waking state), the Swapna (dreaming state) and Sushupta (deep sleep state)¹. With this faulty thinking, it becomes a victim of the bad influences of Maya.

When the good effects of his numerous past lives (here meaning ‘when he is fortunate to have come in contact with wise men and has had the opportunity to study or hear the scriptures’ that) create a conducive environment that fosters right thinking, breeds wisdom and inculcates the desire to know the truth and analyse the situation threadbare, the man begins to wonder what his faults were that had led him into this quagmire of birth and death in the first place, given the fact that his ‘true self’, the Atma, is supposed to be free from life and death, and that it has no physical body. Then why has he come to such a sorry state of existence? He ponders on the eternal spiritual question—‘who am I, what are my shortcomings or faults, and how come I have come to live in this gross world?’ (27-28).

[Note—¹See also verse no. 20-23 above of this Canto 3. Refer also to (a) Shukla Yajur Veda—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad 2/1/16-20, 4/3/9-38. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda—Brahm/Amrit Bindu, verse no. 11; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 11.]

29. ‘During the waking and dreaming states of existence, it appears that I am doing so many things. But what happens during the deep sleep state?’ [During the waking state, the man does so many things with his gross body in this physical world, while in the dreaming state it is the subtle mind that makes him do so many things in the imaginary world of dreams. That is why in both the cases the man is doing something or the other—whether real or imaginary. But in the deep sleep state of existence, the mind becomes defunct, and consequentially there is no activity in spite of the fact that the consciousness does exist in the same body and radiates in it. This is proved by the fact the body does not die, and all its internal functions—such as the working of all its internal organs as the heart, liver, bladder, kidneys, lungs etc.—continue uninterrupted during this deep sleep state as if the man was awake and active. So what is that which lives in this state of deep sleep?]

This question haunts him and he keeps on contemplating upon its answer. [And upon deep analysis and study of the scriptures he comes to the conclusion that the entity which remains alive and active during this phase of deep sleep is called the ‘consciousness’, and it is this entity that is his true ‘self’.] (29).

30. Even as a bale of cotton is reduced to ashes immediately on contact with fire, the worldly ignorance and its attendant delusions are eliminated as soon as the light of wisdom and enlightenment emanating from the pure consciousness lightens up the inner self of the man. This ends all his torments and miseries pertaining to ignorance, delusions and the world (30).

31-32. In this way, when the darkness of ignorance that this gross material world and its delusions are metaphors for are eliminated by the light of true knowledge and wisdom, its place is taken over by the brilliant light representing this truthful knowledge and wisdom. And this knowledge is about the self-illuminated Atma which is pure and uncorrupted, which is untainted and immaculate, which is eternal and truthful, and which is Consciousness personified. [When the world is eliminated, it implies that the gross body consisting of the gross organs of perception and action is also eliminated. These gross organs are the five organs of perception—ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin, and the five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital. It is through these that the Atma interacts with the world during the waking

state of existence. Their removal from sight means that for all practical purposes the physical gross world has been done away with.]

This true knowledge and wisdom are the torch bearers of enlightened state of existence. It removes every trace of darkness and veils of all kinds that cover the glorious light of the Atma and prevent its shine from coming out. True knowledge also enlightens the creature about his distinct identity which is separate from the gross body called the Anna Maya Kosh consisting of the organs of perception and action, as well as the subtle body consisting of the vital winds called the Pran Maya Kosh and the mind-intellect complex called the Mana (mind) and Vigyan (intellect). Therefore, since the creature's 'true self or true identity' is the pure conscious Atma, it follows that both the gross and the subtle components of his existence are eliminated if one were to trace this 'true' identity. [When the creature is asleep, he dreams. During this stage of his existence, the outside body is asleep but the mind and its sub-conscious remain as active as before. The intellect was active when the man was awake in this world and was thinking actively, but it has a hidden role to play here in the dreaming world as well because it is the intellect that decides what the man would remember and learn that forms the basis of the data stored in the mind in the form of memory which his sub-conscious relies upon during dreams. So by erasing or eliminating the role of the mind and intellect altogether, the subtle body which covers the Atma is also removed.]

With the removal of these two bodies that had been covering the Atma like the clay pot covering the lighted lamp (as described in verse no. 15-16 and 25), it is obvious that the light of the Atma would shine through and illuminate the entire inner self of the spiritual aspirant just like the light of the lamp lighting up the surrounding area after removal of the clay pot covering it (31-32).

33. Hence, an enlightened man who is steadfast in his spiritual pursuit, who remains perpetually focused on his Atma during the course of his routine life and manages to do the same thing at the time of his death is able to obtain 'Jivan Mukti', i.e. he obtains freedom from this mundane and tormenting life while he is still alive in this world of artificiality and delusions, a world that is illusionary and entrapping like the mirage of the desert, a world that is like a dark swampy quagmire of contradictions, predicaments, miseries, misfortunes and confusions from which it is too difficult to extricate oneself easily.

Therefore, such an aspirant is deemed to be most wise and enlightened; he is deemed to be most lucky and fortunate; he is privileged and exalted; he has attained complete fulfillment of all his spiritual aspirations and desires (33).

34. An aspirant who has obtained this eclectic and exalted state of Jivan Mukti while he is alive in this world and goes about his routine life while remaining focused on his Atma would obtain the eternal state of liberation and deliverance of his Spirit called the state of 'Videha Mukti' (literally freedom of the Spirit from the limitations or bondage of the gross body) at the time of his death when his Pran and Atma leave the gross body effortlessly and merge seamlessly with their cosmic counterparts just like the air inside a clay pitcher emerging from it and merging seamlessly and without

creating even a ripple of movement into the air present outside this pitcher when it is broken (34).

35. That which remains at the end when all that is untruth and falsehood are eliminated is called the Brahm. This Brahm is without a beginning or end; it is perpetual, ever-present, eternal and infinite; it is imperishable and un-diminishing; it is majestic and magnificent, great and grand. It is steady, constant, unwavering and unmoving. It is free from the tainting effects of the five elements that create such perceptions as taste, smell, words (speech), touch and hearing. It is without any faults and blemishes of any kind whatsoever, it being absolutely immaculate and pure.

This is the teaching of this Upanishad; it is its tenet and canon. Amen! (35).

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(IV—D) Amrit Naada Upanishad

Belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, this Upanishad is based on the philosophy of Yoga or meditation by which a spiritual aspirant establishes a union between his individual self and the cosmic supreme Self known as Brahm. It has thirty nine verses.

This union between the individual ‘self’ and the cosmic ‘Self’ results in the individual being drowned in the ethereal vibrations present in the fathomless and measureless cosmos, vibrations that generate a subtle reverberating cosmic noise called Naad. These vibrations completely submerge him and virtually massage his nerves so much so that the practitioner of Yoga hears nothing else but this Naad all around him. This result in his feeling an overwhelming wave of ecstasy overflowing him which in turn gives him the much sought after sense of bliss and happiness of the highest order. It is something that can neither be conveyed or preached or explained; it is only experienced first hand.

It regards the ethereal divine word OM that is universally used during meditation as a vehicle for concentration of the mind as a chariot (a vehicle) which can take the spiritual practitioner to his destination of attaining supreme state of enlightenment. The divine, spiritual and eclectic value of OM, which is also known as ‘Naad’, the cosmic ethereal sound that is all-pervading and all-encompassing as the background sound present in the cosmos and heard by an ascetic during his meditation, is elaborated upon in a very succinct manner.

Verse no. 2 beautifully uses the analogy of the chariot to describe how OM can be used as a vehicle to reach the supreme state of extreme bliss and ecstasy that is conventionally regarded as the state of existence that accompanies Brahm-realisation.

It goes on to describe the various limbs or branches of Yoga, and the most acclaimed of all meditation exercises that is known as ‘Pranayam’ which entails control of the vital winds inside the body and diverting their energy towards spiritual upliftment. The benefits of Yoga are outlined in this context. This Upanishad is one of the major ones dealing with the concept of Yoga.

Finally, this Upanishad deals with the vital winds called the various Prans which sustain and protect the body. It describes their importance, location and symbolic colours. It concludes that when an ascetic who practices Pranayam manages to concentrate his vital life forces called Pran in the head, he finds final deliverance from the shackling effects of this gross body when he dies, and therefore he does not have to take birth again. Hence we can summarise that this Upanishad prescribes the path of Yoga as a means to fulfill the spiritual aspirations of a wise person.

1. A wise, erudite and sagacious man should constantly study the scriptures, ponder upon their profound truthful tenets, and actually practice them in his life (i.e. implement them). He should realise that this life—which is like the transient streak of lightening or the meteor flying across the dark sky for a fleeting moment only to vanish in the next moment—is a golden and unique opportunity given to the soul to acquire truthful and eclectic knowledge of the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm. Therefore, a wise man should not let go of this opportunity and make the best use of it. He should not fritter away his life in the pursuit of things that are perishable and worthless. Instead, he should spend his life in accessing what is immortal and a provider of eternal peace and happiness (1).

[Note—This verse essentially emphasises the fact that a human body, especially a life as a wise and intelligent man who has favourable circumstances and gets all the opportunities for his spiritual upliftment such as the chance to study the scriptures under the aegis of a learned teacher, a healthy body, a conducive environment for spiritual pursuits, and reasonable availability of worldly necessities and comforts so that precious time is not wasted in their procurement etc. is not obtained so easily and repeatedly. So a truly wise man is one who utilises this golden opportunity to ensure that his soul finds redemption for its self and breaks free from the endless cycle of birth and death in numerous lives, wandering in countless wombs and subjected to horrors of unimaginable magnitude. A wise man should strive to salvage his soul while there is still time, i.e. while his body has not become old and decrepit, and he still has control over its vital functions. It is like an advice given to a school student by his wise and loving father that he must be very careful in his formative years and concentrate upon his studies and character building, because if he loses his chances to do this now, he would repent for this lost opportunity for the rest of his life. Refer Brahm Bindu/Amrit Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 18 also.]

2. [This verse describes the vehicle that the spiritual aspirant should use to attain the supreme citadel of self-realisation which is akin to having access to the supreme Brahm. Two versions are presented here.]

A wise and erudite person who embarks upon the spiritual journey of self and Brahm realisation aiming to reach the abode of Brahm called the Brahm Loka¹ should board a chariot or vehicle symbolised by OM² (the monosyllabic ethereal word standing for Brahm), make Lord Vishnu his charioteer³, and fix his attention on the target of Brahm-realisation by emulating Lord Rudra or Shiva⁴ who remains always in a state of Samadhi or a trance-like state of meditation where one enjoys perpetual bliss and ecstasy. [In other words, a wise aspirant who wishes to attain success in obtaining the eternal fount of bliss and eternity represented by Brahm, called Brahm-realisation, should be

devoted to Lord Vishnu by leaving his destiny in the Lord's hand which is symbolised by making the Lord his charioteer. Since mediation is regarded as the medium of attaining spiritual success, Lord Shiva is invoked as the deity because Shiva is the patron God of ascetics. OM is the Mantra universally used in meditation, so this becomes a vehicle for attaining the state of Brahm-realisation.]

There is another way of interpreting this verse. One should ride upon the symbolic chariot of OM, and make Lord Vishnu its charioteer. Astride this glorious and divine chariot, he should investigate and explore the vast kingdom of Brahm, the Lord of creation. That is, the spiritual aspirant should research the actual 'truth' in existence behind the façade of illusions and delusions by using the divine Mantra OM and being devoted to Lord Vishnu. While doing this, he should retract his mind from everything else and remain perpetually in a state of Samadhi (which is a trance-like state of complete bliss and detachment) like the one obtained by Lord Rudra or Shiva. [Lord Shiva also happens to be the God of death and conclusion. So it implies that the aspirant always keeps in mind the fact that this life and the rest of the world would surely come to an end one day because everything that has a birth and existence is certainly destined to decay and die one day or the other. This would help him to remain always vigilant and alert against falling prey to the enticements of the deluding world which is mortal and perishable; it would prevent him from going astray from his spiritual path of seeking the Truth which is immortal and imperishable.] (2).

[Note—¹The word 'Brahm Loka' refers to the state of existence where the self-realised person becomes one with Brahm. It is the finding of the eternal fount of beatitude and felicity, the attainment of liberation and deliverance of the soul from the endless cycle of birth and death. It is like reaching the citadel where the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm is attainable. It is to be noted that this Brahm Loka is actually not located somewhere in the hypothetical corner in the universe called the Heaven, but in the spiritual aspirant's own heart where his Atma lives, because this Atma is a personification of Brahm.

²OM is the divine Mantra used during meditation as clearly laid out in Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition in its verse no. 71. Further, verse nos. 72-89 of this Upanishad describe the metaphysical importance of OM as an embodiment of Brahm. Refer also to verse nos. 20-25 of this present Amrit Naad Upanishad below which emphasise the use of OM as a medium of doing Yoga.

Now let us see what this OM refers to. The word OM is the ethereal divine word representing the supreme transcendental Brahm which is the only and absolute Truth in creation. This word is used as a Mantra or a group of letters combined together to enable the aspirant to symbolically witness the entire spectrum of creation, right from its conception thorough its expansion till its conclusion.

OM has been treated as the nearest analogue of Brahm which is the only 'truth' in creation and therefore eternal and infinite, because 'truth' has these characteristics. Since the wise aspirant has already become aware that his 'own true self is pure consciousness', and that it is the same as the 'cosmic supreme Consciousness and the universal Truth known as Brahm', he finds a resonance and sync between these two entities. Truth is always eternal and imperishable as compared to falsehood and delusions. Study of the scriptures as advised in the opening lines of this Upanishad inculcates in him the wisdom about the perishable and deluding nature of this world and the eternal nature of his true self. So naturally he would reject something impermanent and go and investigate something that is permanent. With this aim in view, the aspirant relentlessly pursues his goal of finding it without getting distracted by delusions and false

charms of this world. This is indicated by the fact that he constantly remembers Lord Shiva, symbolising his constant awareness of the fact that the life would very soon come to an end.

Now, the word OM has three basic sounds represented by the letters A, U and M. These three are called *Matras* which literally means the time taken or marked to pronounce a short vowel in the Sanskrit language; it also means a vowel mark. Matra refers to the basic ingredients and their magnitude in any given entity. It also means quantity and intensity of an ingredient. In the case of creation, there are three basic components—its coming into being, its development and expansion, and its conclusion. These three are symbolically represented by the three letters of OM—viz. ‘A’ represents the initiation, ‘U’ the development and expansion, and ‘M’ the conclusion. This is because to say the letter ‘A’, one has to open the mouth, signifying life coming into existence. This is evident from the fact that when the child takes birth, the first thing it does is starting to cry, entailing the opening of the mouth. Or when a man wakes up from sleep, he yawns and utters some incomprehensible monosyllables to indicate that the sleep is over. Similarly, to say ‘U’ one has to cup the lips and the muscles of the tongue are rolled forwards, indicating progress and outgoing nature. Finally, to say ‘M’ one has to close the mouth, indicating the reversal of the process when the mouth was first opened to indicate the initiation of life. That is, M stands for conclusion of life; it symbolises death.

In the present context, this verse is talking about meditation on the divine word OM with the eclectic view point that the first letter of OM, i.e. ‘A’ is Lord Vishnu because he is the Viraat Purush from whom the entire cosmos has evolved. Once the creation comes into being, ‘U’ represents the vast kingdom of Brahma, the patriarch creator of this visible world. A wise and erudite spiritual seeker of the Truth researches this world to find out the truth him, and this he does by meditation and contemplation. For this purpose he invokes Lord Shiva who is represented by the third letter ‘M’ signifying the conclusion of creation, or death. Further, Shiva is the patron deity of ascetics and seekers of truth who have renounced the illusionary charms of this world and taken the strict vows of a monk or a friar. Shiva is worshipped as the Lord who symbolises truth and its beauty, an auspicious way of life full of dispassion and detachment from this material world which has a profound impact upon the whole spiritual well being of the creature, including his peace of mind and blissful heart.

For this purpose of meditation, the spiritual aspirant uses the word OM as a vehicle to concentrate his mind and attention on divinity, truth and the eternal source of peace and tranquility, beatitude and felicity known as Brahm. As to why he chooses OM to do meditation to the exception of all other Mantras, the answer is that if one wishes to study, for example, a specialised branch of advanced molecular biology, then he would buy relevant books, go to a relevant college, here relevant lectures and use relevant knowledge to succeed. It would be highly incredulous and incongruous for him to use physics text book and attend classes on this subject in order to study molecular biology! Likewise, OM is the proper channel, the correct path, the right instrument and the fine-tuned apparatus that can enable him to succeed in Brahm realisation. No other way is as effective and as fruitful as this.

³Let us see the meaning of the symbolism here. Lord Vishnu is depicted as the charioteer here to draw a parallel to his incarnation as Lord Krishna when he had become a charioteer of Arjun during the famous Mahabharat war when the Lord had preached the much acclaimed philosophical treatise known as Gita. Vishnu is regarded as Brahm personified in his macrocosmic form as the Viraat Purush, the invisible, all-encompassing and all-pervading macrocosmic gross body of Brahm. So, when the spiritual aspirant makes Vishnu his charioteer he is literally leaving his spiritual destiny in the hands of the

ultimate Lord himself; he is making the Lord his guide and guardian. This ensures that the aspirant would not be tormented by evil forces because the Lord is now responsible for his protection and welfare.

Form the metaphysical interpretation of OM, making Vishnu the charioteer is like meditating and contemplating upon the first letter 'A' of OM. Since the aspirant has made OM as his vehicle for spiritual journey to Brahm-realisation, he must choose a charioteer who is well versed with the path leading to enlightenment as well as the destination which is self-realisation and Brahm-realisation along with their eternal beatitude and felicity. Lord Vishnu knows this path well because he has created the cosmos and is the supreme Brahm himself. Lord Vishnu takes the aspirant through the journey, showing him all the way side villages and towns represented by the countless experiences and ideas that the aspirant comes across in his lifetime. The charioteer gives him a running commentary of all these places, symbolising the fact that if one listens to the divine voice of the inner self where Vishnu is supposed to reside as one's Atma or consciousness, then the chances of his falling from his chosen devotional path are remote, and the progress of the chariot towards its destination of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation would go on smoothly.

The second letter 'U', as we have seen above, represents the expansion of the creation, indicating that the spiritual aspirant is given a wide choice and shown all the pitfalls that come in the way as well as the horrendous consequences of falling from his spiritual goal and getting distracted by the road-side tricksters and cheated by moral imposters. He would then be trapped in the endless cycle of birth and death, and go back to where he has come so far. When the aspirant relies upon his wisdom cultivated by the study of scriptures, he does not allow himself to be laid astray and fall in the trap of such wayside delusions. This ensures that the chariot progresses smoothly onwards towards its final goal.

The last letter 'M' represents conclusion or death. When a man is face to face with the reality of an imminent death, no amount of worldly enticements of material comforts and sensual pleasures would move him, especially if he sees in that death a chance of eternal liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. Such a man would be totally detached from this world, and turn inwards in search of peace and tranquility. This is the culmination of meditation and marked by a perpetual state of Samadhi. This is why such a person worships Lord Shiva who is a living personification of these eclectic virtues and in a perpetual state of Samadhi. The age old adage that 'one becomes what one thinks' is fully applicable here—the aspirant becomes one like these three icons of auspiciousness, righteousness, truthfulness, divinity and holiness (i.e. Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva) with whom he constantly keeps company; he inculcates their virtues and ultimately loses his own independent identity, being completely infused, soaked and drenched in their diving glory, completely imbued in their spiritual colour.

⁴Lord Shiva and Rudra are two names of the same divinity, while Shiva and Vishnu are both regarded as manifestations of Brahm, and therefore synonymous with each other and with Brahm—refer Skanda Upanishad, and Rudra Hridaya Upanishad. Shiva is regarded as the patron God of ascetics and of those who do meditation. The emphasis in this present Upanishad is on attaining the eclectic state of Brahm-realisation through the medium of meditation as described in the following verses, and therefore it is appropriate to regard Shiva or Rudra as the patron God who is invoked during the journey to Brahm.]

3. A wise aspirant should ride the chariot only as long as the path permits so, but as soon as he reaches a point where the chariot is no longer needed or cannot go further, he

should disembark from it and move ahead on his own. In other words, till the time the aspirant has not reached a certain point in his stated objective of spiritual enlightenment and self realisation after which he does not need any more support to move ahead in his spiritual pursuit, he should diligently follow the directions laid down by the scriptures and practice various means prescribed by them, one of them being the practice of Yoga (meditation). But as soon that point is reached when he becomes aware of the pure consciousness present in his bosom, he no longer needs a prop or crutches to move ahead in his spiritual journey any more. After a certain point, the progress is automatic and self-propelled. It becomes so powerful a spiritual force that it magnetically pulls the aspirant towards itself, and then there is no longer any need for meditation and contemplation as well as study of the scriptures and listening to religious discourses. Obviously, when one reaches his goal, there is no point in sticking to the means employed earlier to reach there, because from this exalted citadel of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation where the aspirant has found an eternal wellspring of beatitude and felicity, there is no question of going back to the mortal and perishable world of delusions and miseries, and therefore there would no further need of this 'chariot' and to ride on it again any longer (3).

[Note—This is like getting a car started or a heavy stone rolling. Initially it requires a lot of energy to push the two to get moving, but once the start to move they gain momentum and then no more pushing is needed. Another example would be a space vehicle—the earlier part of its journey to outer space, the time of lift off from earth and the time it is in the lower part of the earth's atmosphere is the most difficult part of the flight because of the exceptional weight of the vehicle, the inertia that has to be overcome, and the high gravitational pull. Once the required height and momentum is gained, the progress becomes easier and requires less energy.]

4. The different Matras of Pranav or OM (as described in verse no. 2) are symbolic of the basic seeds of creation, because it is from them that the rest of the creation has come into being. Letters are the elementary building blocks of words, and the words are at the heart of the holy scriptures because it is by the means of words that the profound spiritual teachings of these scriptures are brought to light.

According to the genesis of creation, the world, both the visible and the invisible, has come into being when the creator Brahma had turned his face in the four directions and pronounced the first elementary words of creation, called the 'Vyahritis'¹. These Vyahritis and the Matras of OM are symbolic of the manifestation of this creation having different attributes and characteristic features from a single divine entity which has no such distinguishing attributes and characteristic features whatsoever.

That attributeless and featureless entity which outlasts this creation and pre-dates it, which is the cause of everything coming into being and is the final point where everything collapses at the end, is the absolutely almighty, omniscient, all-knowing and self-enlightened Brahm or Ishwar. Since this Brahm or Ishwar has no attributes and outlasts the creation, it is represented by the third letter 'M' of OM. This is because 'M' represents conclusion of this deluding and artificial world started by 'A' and expanded by 'U'. Beyond 'M' there is no physical creation as we understand it to mean. Therefore, this state is symbolic of the fourth state of existence called Turiya when the world ceases to exist.

By progressively meditating upon these Matras of OM, the aspirant gradually evolves in his spiritual pursuit from the waking state of consciousness represented by the

first letter 'A' of OM symbolising the initiation of creation, to the second state called dreaming state represented by the second letter 'U' of OM symbolising development and expansion of the creation, and moves ahead in this progression to reach the third state known as the deep sleep state of consciousness represented by the first letter 'M' of OM symbolising the conclusion of creation. When the visible and perceptible creation concludes, there exists the fourth state of consciousness which transcends these three earlier ones, and it is known as Turiya².

This Turiya state is most subtle and sublime; it is beyond the known and perceptible world symbolically represented by the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, such as the vowels starting with the first letter 'A' and the consonants starting with the first letter 'Ka'. In other words, in the Turiya state of consciousness all delusions and imaginations are eliminated and barred; it is a state of supreme enlightenment and realisation where only the Truth exists (4).

[Note—¹The *Vyahritis* are the primary root words pronounced by the creator Brahma at the time of the beginning of creation and from which formed the nucleus around which the seven worlds formed. In other words, the rest of the creation was revealed from these primary sounds created by Brahma.

The seven 'Vyahritis' are the words—(1) Bhu, (2) Bhuvaha, (3) Swaha, (4) Maha, (5) Janaha, (6) Tapaha, and (7) Satyam. 'Bhu' was the nucleus for earth, 'Bhuvaha' for the sky above the earth, 'Swaha' for the space beyond the earth's atmosphere and is generally meant for the heavens, 'Maha' stands for the greater heavens beyond the solar system, called the Maha-Loka where enlightened sages and seers are supposed to dwell (as opposed to earth where ordinary creatures including subterranean creatures would finally take up residence), 'Tapaha' was the place where exalted ascetics would do penances and austerities, and 'Satyam' was the truthful and ultimate abode where the ultimate and irrefutable supreme truthful entity which is the only Authority in creation resides.

According to Sankhya Shastra and the Purans, Brahma, who is known as 'Swayambhu' (self created in the sense that he had no father or ancestor) created seven elements called 'Vyahriti', viz. Bhuh, Bhuvaha, Swaha, Mahaha, Janaha, Tapaha and Satyam respectively (भू, भुवः, स्वः, महः, जनः, तपः, सत्यम्) which constitute the fundamental elements which formed the gross body of the creation as its core building blocks at the macro level. Encircling this core is the rounded globe called 'earth' which is surrounded by concentric circles constituting of 'water', 'energy' called 'Tej', 'wind or air', 'sky or space', the notions that are described as 'pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness and vanity' collectively called 'Ahankar', and the notions of 'importance, majesty, grandeur, magnificence and lordliness' called collectively as 'Mahattatva'. Each of them was ten times larger than its preceding layer or circle.

The *seven Vyahritis* and the worlds they represent are the following—(a) 'Bhu' represents this world (earth), fire, Rig Veda and Pran (life giving breath); (b) 'Bhuvaha' represents the sky called Antariksha, wind or air, Sam Veda and Apan wind (i.e. the wind which passes down the intestines and helps in digestion and excretion); (c) 'Swaha' represents Dukoka (the heavens), Aditya (the celestial sun), Yajur Veda and Vyan (the wind that prevails throughout the body); (d) 'Maha' represents Aditya (the Sun God), Chandrama (the Moon God), Brahm (the supreme transcendental Being who has no specific attributes) and Anna (food which sustains life in this creation); (e) 'Janaha' represents the world inhabited by mortal creatures such as the life on earth; (f) 'Tapaha' represents the world where great ascetics and hermits live to do severe penances and austerities, and therefore it is most auspicious and holy and marked by an effulgence of

divine energy and splendour; and (g) 'Satyam' representing that truthful abode where the supreme transcendental Brahm lives; it is the ultimate destination of all spiritual pursuits, and is marked by eternal beatitude and felicity.

Taittiriyo-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Valli 1, Anuvak 5 describes these Vyahritis. It however focuses on four Vyahritis only, i.e. Bhu, Bhuvaha, Swaha and Maha. In this verse, the different 'Vyahritis' are being worshipped as manifestations of the supreme transcendental Brahm.

²The four states of consciousness are known as waking or 'Jaagrat', dreaming or 'Swapna', deep sleep or 'Sushupta', and transcendental or 'Turiya'. The Turiya state in the context of Yoga has been explained in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/149-152 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.]

5. A wise and erudite man should treat his pure conscious Atma as a Sun whose brilliant rays illuminates the world. [That is, even as the world is made visible when it is lighted by the Sun's rays, it is the consciousness present inside the body of the creature that enables him to see and become aware of the world through the different sense perceptions of the body. Had it not been for the Atma, the body, left to its own account, would not have been able to perceive this world or know anything about it. This is proved by the fact that when the creature dies, i.e. when the Atma has left his body, he is not able to recognise or perceive the existence of the world inspite of the fact that all the organs are still there as before. The Sun is like the Atma, while its light is like the consciousness that emanates from the Atma. Even as the Sun and its rays are synonymous with each other and can't be separated from one another, the Atma and its consciousness are the same and inseparable. Just like a man would not be able to see anything in the dark of the night when the Sun's rays are not able to illuminate the objects in this world, a man would not be able to see or perceive this world without the sense organs of perception which are the external receptors for the mind that actually does the perceiving of the world.]

In other words, it is the presence of the 'consciousness' in the form of the Atma residing in the bosom of the man that enables him to receive the stimuli in raw form from the external world through the organs of perceptions, and then use the mind to interpret them sensibly and classify them into various sense perceptions, such as sight, taste, sound, smell and feeling or touch. The Atma then uses the intellect to deduce an intelligent meaning from them and create a picture of the world in its mind-intellect complex. So, the entire process of being aware of the external world, receiving it through the sense organs of perception, making sense of it and reacting accordingly—all depends upon one single factor which is conscious and alive, which is the supreme Authority at the center of the entire reconnaissance, command and action mechanism of the creature, and without which the entire edifice of life and the existential world would lose their importance and relevance for him.

It is in the 'light' radiating out from this Sun-like consciousness known as the Atma that the mind and intellect show their stupendous powers and potentials, and the organs of perceptions (and of actions for that matter) too mark their presence felt by carrying out their respective functions which are typical to them and that are unique to the existence of 'life' in any form. A dead body would not perceive anything whatsoever.

Again, it is this consciousness or Atma which 'lights up', or infuses the vital factors of 'life, awareness, alertness, energy, strength, ability, drive and vitality' into these two units of the body (i.e. the subtle body made up of mind-intellect complex, and

the gross body made up of the organs of perceptions and action, at the micro level of the individual creature, as well as the entire creation at the macro level) to enable them to carry out their functions effectively. These different functions of the body are collectively responsible for the showcasing of the most astounding and mysterious characteristics that distinguish 'life' in this creation.

In other words, had there been no consciousness, the world with all its alluring charms and enchanting attractions which are so gratifying for the sense organs and keep the mind enthralled and captivated, would automatically lose their relevance and importance. It would be like seeing the world in the dark of night.

Therefore, realising this fact, the wise and erudite aspirant should endeavour to turn away from all things that have no real worth in the world because they are not true and not illuminated themselves (i.e. he should turn away from those things of the artificial world which have no real importance, glory and value of their own, but instead depend upon the Atma to give them their importance). He should exercise restraint on his sense organs as well as the mind-intellect complex and focus them on something of real value and true importance, which is the 'consciousness' called the Atma. Had there been no Atma, the rest of the things in this world would have no value and importance whatsoever.

Exercising control over the sense organs and the mind so that they are preventing from being restless and naturally gravitating towards non-essential entities of the delusory world which have no pith and reality in them, and instead remaining under control and disciplined, is called 'Pratyahar'¹. Pratyahar is therefore putting a tight leash on both the gross body as well as the subtle body of the creature to control their vagaries, recklessness and intransigence (5).

[Note—¹*Pratyahar* has been defined in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/1/7 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition in the following words—"Pratyahar is defined as the control of the mind and the intellect from getting engrossed with, attached to, lured by, or attracted towards the various sense objects of this material world. In other words, it is the control of the various senses of perception that impel a man towards this artificial world and get trapped in its snare."]

6. Yoga is said to have six limbs or branches as follows—Pratyahar, Dhyan, Pranayam, Dharna, Tarka (logic and rationality), and Samadhi (6).

[Note—The *six paths of Yoga* or meditation and contemplation which enables one to realise the true nature of the pure consciousness residing in one's own bosom as the Atma, which is the 'true self' of the aspirant, and establish oneness with this Atma and the supreme Atma of the creation known as Brahm, are the following--(1) *Pratyahar* or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (2) *Dhyan* or contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect; (3) *Pranayam* which means control of the vital winds in the body, called the subtle Prans, by the means of different meditation techniques and harnessing their latent energy and potentials to acquire stupendous mystical powers which enables the aspirant to reach higher state of consciousness which is not otherwise possible in the normal course; (4) *Dharna* or having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; (5) *Tarka* or application of logic and analytical abilities of the mind to reach rational conclusions that are empirical and can stand the rigorous tests of rationality and truth, lending them credibility and value; and (6) *Samadhi* or a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains

perpetually in meditation; or a state when all falsehoods are eliminated and what remains is an unwavering and steady light of realisation of the Truth.

The Yogchudamani Upahishad of Sam Veda tradition describes the six-limbs of Yoga in detail.]

7. Even as the impurities of precious minerals and rare elements extracted from mining of mountains are purified by heating them in the fire of a furnace, all the ignominious impurities and faults that are brought in by the various sense organs of perceptions are burnt when one practices holding of the various vital winds called Prans by the process of Pranayam inside the body. These impurities and faults impinge upon the purity of the soul and create a tainting layer of worldly delusions and their attendant problems around the otherwise glorious Atma, thereby suppressing its natural divinity and sublime glow. [This is like the case of a film of dust covering the glass enclosing the flame of the lantern. The light of the flame appears to be dull and gloomy. When this glass is cleaned, the light shines ever so brilliantly.] (7).

[Note—Metals are extracted by heating their ores in a furnace. This intense heating removes the impurity and brings out the purity of the metal to the fore. Similarly, the various taints that surround the Atma are removed by subjecting it to the rigors of spiritual discipline.

The inputs from the world create *Vasanas*, i.e. desires and passions to enjoy the material pleasures of the world, and these transform into *Vrittis*, i.e. natural habits and inclinations of the aspirant. The *Vrittis* tend to swerve the aspirant away from the path of spiritualism because it is a difficult path, and instead bend it to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the world and gratification of the senses because it is not only easy but most alluring at the same time. Slowly and over time, these faults form a thick crust over the Atma much like scum floating on the surface of the crystal clear water of the lake, thereby suffocating the healthy and vibrant aquatic life that originally flourished in this lake before it got polluted. The *Vasanas* and *Vrittis* suppress the inherently divine glow emanating from this self-illuminated ‘gem’ called the Atma. The Atma then appears to be tainted and faulty, and not in its pristine pure form.]

8. Pranayam should be employed by the spiritual aspirant to reduce to ashes, i.e. to destroy and eliminate the various faults and impurities that have entered via the path of sense perceptions of the body¹. Dharna should be employed by him to similarly reduce to ashes the various sins and evil tendencies of the various organs of the body². Pratyahar should be employed to control the various organs of the body, including the mind, and divert them towards contemplating upon the numerous virtues and divine glories of the supreme transcendental Brahman residing as the soul or the Atma of the aspirant on the one hand, and as revealed in the form of the vast creation on the other hand³ (8).

[Note—¹Verse no. 7 has already shown how *Pranayam* helps the aspirant to burn the various faults that enter the mind along with the different perceptions that the mind constantly receives from the external world. For example, the mind is subjected to a constant bombardment of information in the visual spectrum which it calls ‘sight’. Now, all that is seen is not always righteous, noble and auspicious, for more often than not it is just the opposite, creating a negative impact upon the mind and its sub-conscious, and the consequence corrupting of the Atma because the Atma relies upon the instrument of the mind and intellect to perceive the world in which it lives. The Atma has no means to directly perceive the world; it has to do so through the mind-intellect apparatus called the subtle body, and the organs of perception called the gross body. If any one of them is

corrupted or tainted, the Atma is given a negative feedback, and it is no fault of the Atma if it *then* wrongly perceives the world. The fault is of the mind-intellect because it is the minister appointed by the Atma to sieve through the overwhelming wave of information from the outside world and let only the clean information to reach it. But if the mind-intellect apparatus is not itself properly maintained, then the consequences may be fatal for the Atma.

That is why essentially this Upanishad stresses on these six paths of Yoga which help the aspirant to filter out all rubbish from the world and let in only the divine nectar represented by auspicious, righteous, noble and virtuous ideas and perceptions to reach the taintless and faultless Atma so that its inherent natural beauty and divinity are not compromised.

²*Dharma* is having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path. This helps the aspirant to remain firm in it and prevent any chances of his faltering from it. This firmness helps the body to overcome temptations of the world and the natural affinity of the body and mind to fall prey to them.

³*Pratyahar* is control of the mind and body, and therefore it goes hand in hand with the other two methods. It must be noted that all limbs of Yoga mentioned here have no separate existence, and they must be used in a coordinated manner, just like the different organs of the body, both the external and the internal, function in a coordinate manner to enable the man to lead a normal life. In order to succeed in any enterprise, all the units have to function in a judicious manner and mix prudence with wisdom. When one constantly thinks about good things, it is but natural that it has a positive psychological effect on the mind, and helps it to become noble and wise in the long term.]

9. In this manner, the wise and erudite spiritual aspirant should, after having burnt all faults and cleansing the self of all taints associated with the body and the mind, constantly contemplate upon the pure and pristine Divinity in the form of the ‘conscious Atma’ representing the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being residing in one’s own bosom (9).

10. Pranayam has three phases. While contemplating upon the divine and holy form of the Supreme Being (represented by the ethereal word OM—refer verse no. 1), one should keep the inhaled wind or breath inside the body for a given period of time during the phase called ‘Kumbhak’ (meaning a ‘pot or pitcher’, and here implying holding the wind like filling a pot or pitcher with air). Thereafter, it should be slowly exhaled or let out in the second phase called ‘Rechak’ (literally meaning cleaning or purging, because when the wind is let out of the body it takes along with it all the gaseous impurities and toxins that have accumulated inside it). The final and third phase is called ‘Purak’ (literally meaning to fill or compensate for the loss of wind during exhalation) in which wind is inhaled to fill the body, leading once again to the Kumbhak stage (10).

11. One cycle of Pranayam (Kumbhak, Rechak and Purak) is said to be complete when the practitioner mentally repeats the seven Vyahritis¹ and the full Gayatri Mantra² three times during each phase. [This indirectly determines the time taken for each phase.] (11).

[Note—¹The *Vyahritis* are the following primary words pronounced by Brahma the creator at the time of initiation of creation—OM Bhuha, OM Bhuvaha, OM Swaha, OM Maha, OM Janaha, OM Tapaha, and OM Satyam. Please refer to note of verse no. 4 above.

²The *Gayatri Mantra* has two versions which are presented here. (a) According to one version, it is based on the typical Gayatri Chanda which is a poetical composition consisting of three stanzas or lines each having eight letters or syllables. The total number of letters or syllables is thus twenty four. The Gayatri extolled by this Upanishad is the one strictly conforming to this rule, while the usual and commonly known Gayatri Mantra has four steps or stanzas and is called Anushtup Chanda.

In Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14, the Gayatri of three steps is extolled as the one which is superior to other forms of the Gayatri Mantra having four steps because this three-stepped Mantra is synonymous with Pran, i.e. it is the life or the essence of all that exists.

The Gayatri Mantra having three lines is the following—"Tatsaviturvarnyam Dhimahi Dhiyo Yo Naha Prachodayat".

The fourth line honours and glorifies this Gayatri as a manifestation of the Sun God, and it is as brilliant and splendid as the latter. The Gayatri is--"Paro Rajase Suvarnam"—i.e. it is beyond the reach of darkness, and it has the hue of gold. Since the Sun is a visible manifestation of the supreme Brahm who is the transcendental Consciousness of the entire creation at the macro level of existence, having the Atma resident in the bosom of the individual creature as its micro level counterpart and Pran as its subtle manifestation, the Gayatri Mantra is in honour of the supreme Authority of creation, i.e. in honour of Brahm, the Supreme Being.

(b) The other version is based on the 'Anushtup Chanda' pattern. It is--'OM BHURBHUVAHA SVAHA¹, TATSAVIURVARENYAM², BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAH³, DHIYO YO NAH PRACODAYAT⁴'. It means 'OM is the supreme, transcendental Brahm. He is the lord of creation of the terrestrial, the celestial and heavenly worlds. I offer my oblations to you. That Brahm is luminous like the sun. He is excellent, the best, the most exalted, a destroyer of sins, and a divine entity. May he imbibe, infuse and inspire our intellect with wisdom and enlightenment so that we are purified and move on the righteous and noble path'. The four phrases of the Gayatri Mantra are clearly marked by small numerals in this Mantra. This Mantra appears in the Rig Veda (3/62/10), the Sam Veda (1462), and Yajur Veda (3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/6).

The famous Mantra is dedicated to the Sun God who is a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm. It is this Mantra—which is a group of ethereal words having profound spiritual value and metaphysical importance. It is called Gayatri because it gave protection to the Pran--Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14, verse no. 4. It has been accepted as a manifestation of Pran in Shatpath Brahmin, 1/3/5/15, while it is praised as having the potentials of Agni (fire) present in the faculty of speech known as Vak in Taittiriya Sanhita, 3/2/9/3, as Tej (energy) in Shatpath Brahmin, 1/8/2/13, and as Brahm (the supreme transcendental consciousness) in Maitri Brahmin, 4/3/1. According to the Purans (mythological histories of the Hindus), the Gayatri has been praised having manifested in the form of the Trinity Gods—Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder--Skanda Puran, Kashi Khand, Purva, 4/9/58. Whatever that exists is a revelation of Gayatri because it is a manifestation of Brahm—Chandogya Upanishad, 3/12/1. In fact this whole earth that gives refuge to all the life forms in this world is a manifestation of Gayatri-- Chandogya Upanishad, 3/12/2. By worshipping it, a person is blessed with worldly assets such as abundant livestock and flourishing family, a long, healthy and active life, wealth and fortunes, good name and fame, as well as spiritual attainment in the form of Brahm realisation—Atharva Veda, 19/71/1.

The Gayatri Mantra has been expounded and elucidated upon in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14 and other Upanishads, such as the Savitri Upanishad which is entirely dedicated to it, the Maitrayanyu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 7, and

the Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 3, Section 12, verse nos. 1-9 belonging to the Sam Veda tradition. Besides these, the Gayatri Upanishad appears as eight assorted verses or Kandikas numbering 31-38 of the Gopath Brahmin belonging to the Atharva Veda.

It has been said in the scriptures that Brahmins, the highest class amongst the humans and who are regarded as the most learned and wise amongst them, were born from Gayatri, thereby drawing a parallel between the highest stature and exalted standing of Brahmins amongst the creatures and the Gayatri amongst the hymns. It is pertinent to note here by the way that Kshatriyas, the warrior class, were born from the Chanda known as Trishtup, and Vaishya, the trading class, from the Chanda known as Jagati. In other words, the divine and eclectic powers encrypted in the Trishtup Chanda revealed themselves as the Kshatriya, and those of the Jagati as the Vaishya. The Trishtup Chanda has four lines each having eleven letters or syllables, totaling forty four letters or syllables in all, while the Jagati Chanda has six lines with eight letters or syllables each, totaling to forty eight letters or syllables.]

12. The sign of properly doing Rechak phase of Pranayam is that the wind or breath is exhaled fully from the body into the outer space or sky through the nostrils. No trace of wind is to remain inside the body at all. During this phase, the practitioner should be absolutely in a mentally neutral state of existence so that there are no thoughts of any kind impinging upon his consciousness (12).

13. The sign of properly doing Purak phase of Pranayam is that the wind or breath is slowly and gradually inhaled inside the body through the nostrils (with the mouth shut tightly) just like one draws liquid into the mouth by sucking it up through a long straw (13).

14. The sign of properly doing Kumbhak phase of Pranayam is to remain absolutely immobile and retaining the wind inside the body such that no part of it is able to escape or leak from it through any aperture, such as the nostril or mouth or anus (14).

[Note—The three phases of Pranayam and the entire process to successfully do it have been described in great detail in the following Upanishads—Trishikhi Brahmin of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 2, verse nos. 24-158; Yogchudamani Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition; and in Yog Kundali, Canto 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda.]

15. The sign of attaining the state of 'Prashant' which literally means achieving total neutrality and its attendant tranquility, peace, equanimity, dispassion and detachment from everything in this world is the state when one begins to see or observe everything having any shape and form in this world with the same detachment and disinterest as shown by a blind man, and hearing any sound or word emanating from this world with the same indifference and lackadaisical attitude as displayed by a deaf man. Such an acclaimed practitioner treats the body as a log of wood, i.e. he is not at all ruffled by either the pains or discomfiture of the body, or gets joyous and happy when the body feels comfortable and its desire for gratification attended to (15).

16. A wise man is one who understands the fact that the mind is the root cause of all types of 'Sankalps', i.e. all volitions and yearnings, all desires and aspirations, all vows and promises, all hopes and expectations that a man has or makes. So in order to overcome this hurdle and exercise control over the mind, he should diligently merge it

with his intellect and the discriminating consciousness so that the mind is put under tight leash. It is because the intelligent Atma or consciousness knows that the world is delusory and misleading, and all the things with which it attempts to tempt the mind are perishable and illusionary. Following this trail would ultimately lead to endless miseries and perpetual restlessness for the mind much like running after a mirage in the desert in search of the illusive water. When this notion becomes firmly engrained in the aspirant's mind and it is put under the care of the wise and erudite intellect working under the guidance of the discriminatory Atma, it is called 'Dharna' (16).

17. Intelligently consulting and interpreting the scriptures and understanding their tenets and doctrines with a rational and logical mind-intellect apparatus, employing the method of discussing and debating them with a positive attitude so that all confusions and doubts are dispelled and the empirical 'truth' is grasped, is called 'Tarka'.

The final state when the aspirant arrives at the ultimate Truth and when nothing remains to be searched anymore because the spiritual citadel has been reached, then this state is known as 'Samadhi'. [It is marked by exemplary steadiness and fortitude.] (17).

18. The spiritual aspirant should select a proper place to practice meditation. This site should be reasonably comfortable and favourable for such practices (because unnecessary physical discomfort is counter productive). Therefore, the ground should be even, the surroundings pleasant, and the place should have a general holy ambience conducive to spiritual practices. [This is to ensure that the practitioner of meditation can concentrate on his spiritual pursuit with concentration and single-minded devotion without suffering from avoidable and unnecessary hardships which can cause physical and mental irritation and consequent distraction for him. For example, pebbles, thorns, un-natural dryness and hardness etc. of the ground where he sits for meditation, or excessive heat and cold, or dampness and aridity in the environment, or disturbance in the form of noise of any kind, or where worldly mundane matters are the dominant feature as compared to a spiritual environment—all these circumstances would have their bearing upon the aspirant's peace of mind and his ability to concentrate; they would have a negative effect on the final consequences of the spiritual effort. Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 10, and Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 22-23 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

In such a favourable site which encourages spiritual practices, the aspirant should sit down with a peaceful and undisturbed mind to practice meditation and contemplation. He should repeat the eclectic Mantras of the Mandal Brahmin¹ to help him in concentrating his mind and focusing it on the practice of Yoga (meditation and contemplation) (18).

[Note—¹The Mandal Brahmin Mantra is the following—"Yadet Mandalam Tapati" etc. These Mantras essentially are dedicated to the Sun God as manifestation of the supreme Brahm or the Viraat Purush (the invisible and all-inclusive macrocosmic gross body of Brahm). The Sun God is said to ride a chariot as he moves across the sky. This movement of the Sun produces a sound which can be verified by the occurrence of breeze that whistles and gushes during the pre and post noon hours across hot plains and in the valleys of the mountains during the day time. This sound when envisioned in the backdrop of the cosmos has been visualised as Naad which in turn is pronounced as OM. The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda is revealed by the Sun God to

sage Yagyavalkya, and since this sage is regarded as the greatest exponent of the Yajur Veda, it is expected that the Sun is honoured as the equivalent as the Atma in all the Upanishadic texts of this Veda.]

19. He should sit properly in any one of the following three sitting postures—viz. Padmasan¹, Swastikasan², or Bhadrasan³, while facing the North (19).

[Note—¹*Padmasan* is to sit in a lotus posture. This entails to sit crossed-legged in such a way that the foot of the left leg rests on the upper and inner part of the thigh of the right leg, and vice versa. The spine, neck and head are in a ram-rod straight position, and the hands, with palms facing upwards and resting one on the top of the other, are placed on the folded legs in front of the navel region. This Asan has been described in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 39 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

²*Swastikasan*—The sitting posture called ‘Swastik-Asan’ is one in which a person sits with the sole of his one foot lying on the center of the thigh of the opposite leg, and the hands are held in such a way that one is bent at right angle at the elbow and held upright while the other is bent and rests upon the thigh of thigh of that side. This Asan has been described in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 35 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

³*Bhadrasan*—A ‘Bhadrasan or Bhadra Asan’ (literally, to sit like a gentleman) is when the two ankles are placed on either side of the suture region, called the ‘siwani’, below the testicles and the feet are clasped or held tightly by the hand of that side (i.e. lift foot by the left hand and the right foot by the left hand). This Asan has been described in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 45 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.]

20. Then he should close one nostril with one of his fingers and inhale gradually with the other nostril. When his abdomen and lungs are full, he should close both the nostrils and withhold the breath. During this process, he should think of nothing else but the glorious and divine ‘word’¹ (20).

[Note--¹This ‘word’ is OM which is the cosmic ethereal sound representing Divinity known as Pranav which is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Brahm. In other words, while inhaling breath during the ‘Puruk’ phase of Pranayam as well as during the ‘Kumbhak’ phase when it is retained for a certain period inside the body, the practitioner of Yoga should contemplate upon nothing else but OM. That is, he should concentrate his mind on mentally repeating this divine Mantra with stress on each of its syllables so that the sound waves of the repeated Mantra and the ones that are inherently present in the cosmic wind inhaled as breath coalesce with other and mutually enhance the latent energy present in them. This is like two waves in the ocean overlapping each other and resulting in a surge of energy which builds up and accumulates so much force that it can capsize huge ships if it so wills. Thus, the aspirant is able to harness the latent energy present in the sound waves of the divine Mantra OM along with that which is generated by the movement of the air in and out of the body during Pranayam]

21. This monosyllable ‘word’ is OM, the ethereal sound representing the eternal, imperishable and infinite supreme transcendental Brahm.

OM is also to be repeated and contemplated upon while gradually exhaling breath during the ‘Rechak’ phase of Pranayam.

In this way, the spiritual aspirant should repeatedly invoke this divine ethereal Mantra OM and do Pranayam to cleanse his mind and free it from all impurities and

faults pertaining to this world. [Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 14.] (21).

22. The practitioner of Yoga should cleanse the mind (and body) of all impurities by diligent practice of Pranayam. He should employ this cleansed mind to focus on the finer aspects of the ethereal word OM by contemplating upon each of its five elementary sounds (A, U, M, 'Anuswar' or dot ., and the crescent shaped 'Naad' (ँ)) placed on the symbol for the word OM. The final shape of the word OM is— ॐ .

While thus meditating upon OM, he should contemplate upon the different divine aspects of each of these syllables, their divine qualities and eclectic attributes, as well as their patron Gods or deities¹.

He should take the precaution that this type of practice of holding of the breath while repeating OM should not exceed the prescribed limits. There are three cycles in doing Pranayam with the help of OM.

The first is called 'Sthul Matra' or crude or coarse form of Pranayam. This involves eighty cycles of inhaling breath, retaining it and then expelling it while saying OM once each time. The second is called 'Ati Sthul Matra' or the finer or more refined form of Pranayam whereby the breath is held inside the body during which OM is repeated eighty times. And finally, the third is called 'Sthulaati-sthul' or the best and finest form of Pranayam wherein the second type is repeated eighty times in succession. It is said that more than that in one session is not advisable.

This cycle of Pranayam is to be done four times a day—at dawn, at noon, evening and night (22).

[Note—¹The patron deities of these five syllables of OM are the following—Vishnu patronises the letter 'A', Brahma the letter 'U', Shiva the letter 'M', the cosmic Shakti or the energy at the core of creation and its regulation is represented by 'Dot', and the supreme transcendental Brahm himself is indicated by the cosmic Naad represented by the symbol of the crescent moon on the top of the symbol of OM. Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 14.]

23. A wise and expert practitioner of Yoga is one who sits completely immobile (in any of the postures mentioned above) and fixes his eyesight either in the straight line in the front of him, or in the upwards direction towards the sky, or in the lower direction towards the ground in the front (23).

24. This form of Yoga takes some time to yield result like the palm tree that takes some time to bear fruits. It is to be practiced in a systematic manner, and without disruption. [That is, it should be practiced daily, at a fixed time and place, adhering to the number of cycles of Pranayam done daily, and not doing them on a ad-hoc basis or in a fluctuating or erratic manner.]

Similarly, it is prescribed that the time taken to mentally say the twelve 'Matras' or letters or elementary sounds of OM¹ should also be maintained and observed religiously. That is, the time taken to say the word OM should always be the same, no matter how many times it is repeated. It should not be done in an irregular, haphazard and

erratic manner; it must be ensured that the time taken to say OM is the same each time (24).

[Note—¹The *twelve Matras* of OM are equivalent to four cycles of saying this word. This is because OM consists of the three basic sounds represented by the letters A, U and M. So, one cycle of three letters multiplied by four such cycles would yield twelve Matras of OM. Refer Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 2-5 of the Krishna Yajur Veda.]

25. This cosmic ethereal sound represented by the divine word OM is so mystical, esoteric, enigmatic and mysterious as well as inimitable that it cannot be described in words or mimicked by the body by its own physical efforts. It is not easily perceived by the organ of hearing present in the body (i.e. by the ear) and neither can it be reproduced by the organs of speech or voice of the gross body (i.e. by the tongue and the mouth). It is neither a consonant nor a vowel; it is neither tenor nor bass or baritone sound; it is neither grave and somber nor shrill and light; it is not a moan or a cheerful crackle. It is not a sound that can be copied or mimicked by the throat (as a gurgling, guttural, husky or squeaky sound emanating from the throat; or such sounds as 'Ha, Ah, Oh' etc.), palate (as a chuckling, clucking, quacking or chirping sound emanating from the back of the tongue and the roof of the mouth, such as the sound of the alphabets K, Q, S, T etc.), lips (such sounds that require perceptible lip movement such as when pronouncing the letters B, F, M, P, Q, U, V, W and Y etc.) and nose (i.e. the nasal sound of the vowels; sounds resembling a snore, or when one hums a musical note through the nostrils with the mouth closed; a resonating and sonorous sound). It is not also the sound of the 'R' which resonates in the head in the cerebrum region and has its origin in the upper part of the hard palate.

The divine ethereal word OM cannot be pronounced or mimicked by the region of the mouth behind the lips where the teeth are located. [That is, none of the sounds generated in the front part of the mouth where the two rows of teeth are located, or even by the rubbing of the teeth against themselves such as gnashing of the teeth in anger or chattering of the teeth when one shivers in severe cold, can resemble, by any stretch of the imagination, the sound emanating from OM.]

'It' (i.e. the supreme, transcendental and absolute Truth in creation, known as Brahm and pure cosmic Consciousness, which is at the heart and core of the entire existence, the very cause of all that exists) is the only imperishable and eternal entity that is sublime, divine, holy, eclectic and immaculate, and which does not decay and become extinct. 'It' is the entity referred to by the divine word OM representing the ethereal cosmic sound known as 'Naad' that permeates and pervades uniformly throughout the length and breadth of the entire universe much like the all-pervading and all-encompassing cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. [It is like saying that 'water' is present throughout the 'ocean' or the 'space' is present wherever there is the 'sky'.]

So, OM is regarded as being synonymous with Naad and Brahm (25).

[Note--In other words, the divine word OM is used as a means for meditation and contemplation because of its eternally divine and eclectic value. Anything which is glorious and of a high order itself would impart its own characteristic imprint on things with which it comes in contact. If a man works in perfume factory for instance, his clothes are bound to bear the sweet fragrance even after he has left his work place a long time back; this smell lingers on and sticks to his body and his clothes. An expert doctor always ensures that medicines of the best quality are given to his patient so that the

disease is cured rapidly and permanently. Since meditation is a highly evolved form of spiritual exercise, it needs the best medium, and nothing is better than OM in helping the aspirant in concentrating his mind on the supreme transcendental Truth. It is because OM is eternal and imperishable like the Truth.

The idea here is that the practitioner of Yoga should employ the components of sound represented in their entirety by the word OM as a means of focusing his mind during meditation, as well as a means of establishing a unity between his own true pure 'conscious self' with the cosmic 'Supreme Consciousness' known as Brahm. He should envision the presence of the cosmic Consciousness around him when he uses OM as a Mantra during meditation. He must be convinced and certain that this Mantra he is using is the best representative of Brahm, or the best medium to reach his spiritual destination.]

26. Whichever path the mind of the ascetic regards as attractive and worth pursuing, the Pran or consciousness also follows that path. In other words, when the ascetic 'thinks'—and this 'thinking' process involves the mind—that one particular thing is beneficial for him and his spiritual welfare, he whole-heartedly goes for it. Since the pure consciousness is the true 'self' and identity of the ascetic, it follows that it follows the path shown by the mind.

That is why it is very imperative that the spiritual aspirant keeps a strict tab on the functioning of his mind. Hence, to ensure that the Pran or consciousness invariably and infallibly pursues a path that is most noble, auspicious and righteous, the wise and erudite ascetic should regularly practice restraint upon his mind (26).

27. The valves of the subtle heart are like the trap-doors through which the vital winds called 'Pran' present in the body enter the path called 'Sushumna'¹ which snakes upwards (from the bottom of the spinal cord) and reach the top of the head. At this top end is the opening through which the Pran can finally escape from the cage of the body and find permanent liberation, thereby delivering the ascetic for good from the captivity of the body. This opening in the skull is called 'Brahm-Randhra', and it is also called the symbolic 'door of Moksha', or the door that opens up to enable the Pran or the vital life-bearing winds present in the ascetic's body to escape from its entrapments and provide the ascetic with final liberation and deliverance for his 'self'².

Another name for this Brahm-Randhra is 'Surya Mandal' or the space around the Sun in the sky. This is a symbolic way of saying that as soon as the vital winds called Pran escape from the body into the outer atmosphere, the sense of liberation and expansion is akin to going up high in the air, much above the gravitational pull of the earth, and feeling a profound sense of weightlessness and expansion so typical in the higher reaches of the solar system. While on the earth the body feels so heavy and constrained by its physical limitations, but higher in the deep recesses of the cosmos the sense and feeling of liberation and expansion is so exhilarating and elating that no words can define them. Similarly, when the expert and wise ascetic practices Yoga and manages to sufficiently control his vital winds so that he can divert them from remaining trapped inside the body and wandering aimlessly in it to moving upwards through the duct in the body called Sushumna, to finally reach the top of the head and then escape from the hair-like slit known as 'Brahm-Randhra' present there into the outer space called the 'Surya Mandal', it is said that the ascetic has attained liberation and deliverance from the physical limitations imposed on the Pran by the gross body (27).

[Note—¹The *Sushumna* duct is the nerve going from the bottom of the spinal cord, through its central core, right up to the top of the head. According to Yoga philosophy, there is a coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine, and it is called Kundalini. When it is activated, the energy trapped inside it also snakes up this same Sushumna nerve to go up to the top of the head. As hot air is known to rise up in a closed vessel and escape through any opening at the top, like the spout of a kettle, the heated vital winds inside the body also rise up when Pranayam is practiced. The heart is the pump of the body, and it is the subtle sight where the consciousness known as the Atma is present. The best proof of this is when the heart stops functioning, all other signs of life in the body would also immediately collapse. On the other hand, as long as the heart continues to beat, the man is said to be ‘alive’ inspite of the fact that his other organs might have ceased to function. For example, a man paralysed in the limbs, or one suffering from the failure of one or the other internal organs such as the liver and kidneys is deemed to be alive as long as the heart beats. Even when the mind and intellect are not working properly, for instance in a mad man or when the man is in comatose state, he is not declared dead because the heart is still functioning.

The heart is the sanctum sanctorum where the revered deity is enshrined. This ‘deity’ is Brahm in the form of the consciousness known as the Atma which is in turn the ‘true self’ of the creature. The rest of the body is merely a ‘vehicle or a chariot’ for this ‘self’ to reach its destination. Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 20.

So, heart is the defining factor which determines whether or not the ascetic is alive. That is why it is the site of the consciousness or Atma. Prans is also synonymous with life, and therefore both the Pran and the Atma co-exist. Now, this Atma or pure consciousness uses the vehicle of the Pran to move out of the body of the ascetic at the time of his death.

The wind needs some opening in the body to go out of it, and these openings are referred to as the *doors* of the body because they facilitate the exit of the vital wind along with the consciousness from the enclosure of the body. According to one version, there are said to be nine doors in the body through which it can move out. These so-called ‘nine doors of the body’ are two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, and one urethra. Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, 3/18.

Besides these nine, there is the ‘tenth door’ or opening, and it is this ‘Brahm Randhra’ present at the top of the head.

According to Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 1, there are eleven doors of the body. They are the following—two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, one mouth, navel, anus, genitals and Brahm-randhra (the hair like slit on the top of the head).

A practitioner of Yoga or meditation is able to control this exit; he is able to determine how his Atma or consciousness, representing his ‘true self’, leaves his body along with the Pran by the means of meditative exercises. The escape of the vital winds (Pran) along with the consciousness (Atma) through the hair-like slit called the *Brahm-Randhra* present at the top of the head is considered as the best path to leave the body as compared to other means of leaving it. Since everyone wants the best type of end for himself, it is but natural to expect that the ascetic would endeavour and strive to ensure that he trains himself sufficiently enough to ensure that his Pran, along with his conscious ‘self’ or Atma, would leave the body by the best path available to it, and it is obviously the top of the head. This word ‘top’ itself indicates something which is the best, something that is excellent and most desired.

Hence, the end obtained by the conscious Atma by its escape through this symbolically ‘highest placed door’ in the body is tantamount to its obtaining the most exalted state of permanent deliverance from the entrapments of the body. It is like the

Atma of that ascetic being welcomed in the palace of the supreme Emperor where other such noble and liberated souls have their abode.

Refer also Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17 and Kshurikopanishad, verse no. 18-20.]

28. A wise ascetic should honestly abstain from such negative traits as having fear, becoming angry and wrathful, being indolent and lethargic, sleeping excessively or remaining awake for long times at a stretch, and eating a lot and more than that needed to sustain a healthy and well nourished body, or fasting unduly for long periods of time (28).

[Note—The various hurdles in Yoga and which should be avoided by a spiritual aspirant have been enumerated in Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 56-61 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

29. Those wise ascetics who practice Yoga (especially Pranayam, using OM as the Mantra to do meditation and contemplate upon the supreme transcendental Being) in a progressive, regular, systematic and organised way along with strict adherence to all its doctrines and tenets, honestly honouring all the proscribed restrictions as well as diligently following all the sanctioned ways to achieve success in one's spiritual objective as mentioned in this as well as other Upanishads, are able to obtain success in their spiritual endeavour and become enlightened and self-realised in a period of three months.

In other words, within a short period of three months, the diligent and sincere practitioners of Yoga are able to successfully harness the latent spiritual energy lying dormant and hitherto untapped inside them, and utilise it to uplift their soul from remaining engrossed and entangled in the web of worldly ignorance and its attendant delusions, and instead reach for the high and venerated citadel of self-realisation which would open the gates to their ultimate liberation from the endless cycle of birth and death, and pave the way for the emancipation and salvation of their souls. The awareness of the stupendous glories, splendour, potentials, powers and authority of the pure 'self' which is nothing but pure consciousness and a personification of the supreme Brahm is called 'self-realisation' which is tantamount to liberation from ignorance and delusions pertaining to the body and the world in which it lives. Deliverance from this world is the ultimate aim of doing Yoga by the ascetic, and when he becomes aware of the path that can lead him to his objective, and when he actually follows that path with due diligence and sincerity, it is deemed that he is wise and erudite. Such ascetics who have realised their hidden potentials as well as the astounding power and authority, the radiance and splendour, the glory and majesty of their 'true self' or their Atma, are indeed called a 'Gyani' or a learned man who is well versed in the truthful knowledge pertaining to what constitutes delusions and entanglements, and what is true liberation and deliverance, what is real emancipation and salvation (29).

30. Within a time of four months he is able to have visions of the divine Gods. Within five months he acquires mystical powers which make him as powerful as the Gods themselves. And within six months¹, if he so wishes, he can obtain the final liberation and deliverance for himself when he achieves the exalted stature of 'Kaivalya'² (30).

[Note—¹The different periods of time have been reiterated elsewhere also. Refer Yoga Kundali Upanishad, 1/13, 2/31-36, 42, 44-48; and Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse nos. 122-127.

²Kaivalya is that state of liberation of the soul when the ascetic's Pran or vital winds leave the subtle space inside the body and merge with the cosmic wind present outside his body. The path taken for this final escape is narrated in verse nos. 26-27. This sort of deliverance is sought by ascetics who have enlightened enough to realise that their 'true self' is the pure consciousness Atma which is a 'spirit' having no forms, no contours, no sizes and no colours. This 'self' and the cosmic 'Self' are no different from one another, they are both pure consciousness, there is nothing but this consciousness that is of any value and importance in creation, that this 'consciousness is at the root cause of creation and is known as the supreme transcendental Brahm, that there is no other deity to whom worship and honour should be offered than this pure conscious Atma, and there is no greater 'truth' than this fundamental realisation. Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 148.

Such a self-realised and Brahm-realised ascetic would not wish any other form of emancipation and salvation, called 'Mukti', than to reunite his Atma (pure conscious soul) and his Pran (the vital winds that drive the body and keep the Atma protected and sustained inside the otherwise inane and gross body of the creature) with the supreme Atma and transcendental Pran of this creation known as Brahm. Since Brahm is omnipresent and all-pervading, since this divine entity is formless and attributeless, the ascetic simply removes the barrier between his 'true self' residing in his gross body as his Atma by discarding the latter, and merges with his principal form as the 'spirit' which leaves the body to vanish for ever in the cosmic 'Spirit' that is universally present everywhere. He need not die and go to some imaginary 'heaven' where such and such God lives, because for him that 'God' is no one else than his own true self or his own conscious Spirit.]

31-32. While contemplating upon the five elementary elements of creation, such as the earth, water, fire, air or wind, and sky, one should meditate on one or more 'Matras' or basic sounds that constitute the texture of the cosmic fabric revealed in the form of the ethereal divine word OM representing the entire creation in its nascent and primary form. It is from OM symbolising these basic elements that the rest of the visible and invisible creation has evolved. The meditation should start from the grossest and heaviest of the five elements because it represents the physical 'earth' upon which we live, which needs no other proof of its existence besides its own visibility and the physical support it gives the entire visible creation, and which is the easiest element to visualise and focus one's attention on. The meditation then progresses gradually to higher level, and the five elements are meditated upon depending upon their subtlety and sublimity, with the most sublime and subtle of them being meditated at the last because of the difficulty of its accessibility. [It is like the case of the student first learning about the world in class one through visual pictures, and slowly and in due course of time graduates to become a great scientist or philosopher who would show others the way instead of learning about it himself!]

So, while contemplating upon the 'earth' element, one should meditate on all the five sound forms or syllables¹ that constitute the word OM; while contemplating upon the 'water' element, one should meditate on the four sound forms or syllables² that constitute the word OM; while contemplating upon the 'fire or energy' element, one should meditate on the three sound forms or syllables³ that constitute the word OM; while

contemplating upon the 'air or wind' element, one should meditate on the two sound forms or syllables⁴ that constitute the word OM (31); and while contemplating upon the 'sky or space' element, one should meditate on the one sound form or monosyllable⁵ that constitute the word OM.

Finally, while contemplating upon the ultimate Truth represented by Pranav which is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Brahm who is invisible, imperceptible, attributeless, almighty, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, immutable, immanent, all-encompassing and all-pervading element in creation, one should meditate on only the half syllable⁶ which has no distinctive sound, no special form, no definable characteristic or attribute, and no other existence except as pure cosmic Consciousness.

A wise, erudite and enlightened ascetic regards his body as the habitat of all the five elements of creation. He visualises that his body is the microcosmic cosmos, with the grossest and the heaviest of the five elements lying at the bottom (i.e. in his leg region) and the subtlest and the lightest at the top (i.e. in his head region), while the rest of the elements occupying the space in between depending upon their grossness or subtlety. Thus, he starts his meditation at the bottom, i.e. in his toes, focusing his attention at the tip of the toes and consciously feeling the presence of life and vitality in this part of the body. Then he gradually shifts his attention from down upwards till he reaches the top of the head in a progressive manner.

In other words, for the purposes of meditation, he visualises that the 'earth' element is present in his body from the tip of the toes to the knees, the 'water' element from the knees to the hip region, the 'fire' element from the hip to the heart region (i.e. in the area of the abdomen), the 'air' element in the region from the chest to the area of the nostrils, and the 'sky' element in the top of the head. Finally, when he has reached this stage, he would have automatically become self-realised and enlightened. Then he would no longer need a prop or support in his meditation, and would hear the cosmic sound of ether reverberating in his head. This sound called 'Naad' has no definition and characterizations, and therefore it is regarded as a 'half-syllable' or just an indication of the presence of consciousness that can be felt and experienced and witnessed, but not represented by any of the known letters or syllables. It is the fundamental and primordial sound that existed even before the first trace of creation had even been imagined or visualised.

This most evolved form of meditation and contemplation helps the ascetic to gain authority over all the elements in creation. [And since the body is a product of these five elements, it naturally follows that he is able to exercise full control over his body.] (32). [31-32.]

[Note—¹The five Matras (pronounced as "Maatraas") of OM are the following—A, O, U, M and the humming sound produced when the mouth is finally closed after the final letter M has been pronounced. This last sound resembles the reverberation heard when there is a distant explosion, indicating the ripples formed in the cosmic ether immediately after the first 'Big Bang' or cosmic explosion. From the metaphysical perspective, it was the first step taken by the supreme Brahm to initiate creation. These first ripples formed waves on the surface of this otherwise calm surface of the cosmic ether which overlapped each other as they moved forward from the central core of the cosmic explosion. The result was the generation of huge cosmic waves, the like of which are witnessed in the stormy ocean, and these waves produced 'sound' as they rolled on from their point of origin. This sound is conceptualised as OM. The cosmic debris and stupendous energy

generated by the combined effect of the explosion and these waves resulted in the formation of the rest of the elements, and these elements formed the building blocks of the creation as we know it today.

²The four Matras make the entity a wee bit lighter and subtler than that with five Matras. This is a metaphoric way of saying that it symbolises the next lighter form of creation, or the form that is a bit less gross and a bit more subtle than the one with the full load of five Matras. If the five Matras are represented by the earth element, which is the heaviest of the five elements in creation, then the one slightly lighter and less dense than earth is 'water' element. Hence, while meditating upon the water element, the ascetic should focus his attention on the mental repetition of these four letters of OM, which are A, O, U and M, and consciously visualise the presence of consciousness in the region of the body from the knee to the hip region. That is why urine is formed in the lower part of the abdomen, and when one remains standing for long periods of time, the legs swell due to accumulation of bodily water in them.

³The three Matras of OM are the basic sounds of A, U and M. Applying the same logic as described in paragraph 2 above of this note, this is symbolic of an element which is lighter and subtler than water. Such an entity is the 'fire' element. It is present in the abdomen region, and that is why food eaten is digested here just like it is being cooked in an oven. So, while moving the focus of this attention from the hip region upwards towards throat, the ascetic should imagine the fire element as burning inside him and contemplate upon these three primary sounds that constitute OM. The three Matras of OM are indicative of three dynamic forces of creation called 'Brahmi' related to Brahma the creator, 'Raudri' related to Rudra the concluder of creation, and 'Vaishnavi' related to Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation—refer Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda, verse no. 86.

⁴The two Matras of OM are the two forms of sound produced by pronouncing the twin letters A and U together, and then U and M together. This is the second most subtle and lightest element in creation, and is known as the 'air or wind' element. It would be noted that when either of these twin letters are pronounced, a resonating sound is created, much like the rumbling of a plane taking off or landing in a distant respectively. The first two letters A and U = AU symbolise the taking off of the plane or the unfolding of the creation, and the second group of letters U and M = UM sound like the plane is landing, symbolising the conclusion or resting of the creation. These two Matras represent the 'sky or space' elements as it is in the space of the sky that all other elements had emerged in the beginning. This is because an open space is needed for anything to raise its head and stand up to make its presence felt; nothing can grow and develop in the confines of a closed space. Thus, while moving his focus of attention higher from the heart region to the forehead region (or the area around the eyebrows), the ascetic should concentrate upon these two Matras of OM as representing the consciousness present in his body.

⁵The single Matra of OM is the monosyllable word itself. This happens when the meditation has reached its climax, and the ascetic has submerged himself in the cosmic Naad so much so that he literally drowns in its ethereal waves, and the cosmic reverberation of OM overwhelms his consciousness. Even as a man submerged in the water of the ocean loses his sense of distinction of anything pertaining to the external world, because he does not hear any of the genres of sound that have their existence above the surface of the ocean but hears only the sounds inherently present in the water of the ocean, an ascetic who has finally submerged himself in the overwhelming sound of the cosmic Naad (the cosmic ethereal sound that is present in the background of this visible creation) and has tasted its blissfulness in his mind, he does not care about any formalities, and the only thing that he hears is the resonance of the divine cosmic word OM reverberating in his head. This happens in the highest echelons of the body in the

area of the head between the forehead and the top of the skull where the 'Brahm-Randhra' is situated.

Thus, the ascetic should contemplate upon OM in its entirety when he has reached this exalted state of existence when he can withdraw his attention from the rest of the body and focus it on the single area of it in the head. Obviously, in this state he would be unaware of the presence of the other parts of the body, and perceive consciousness only in the upper part of the head, i.e. in the region of the Brahm-Randhra. This is the highest form of Yoga, and it brings about a union of the 'self' with the 'cosmic Self'.

It would be pertinent to note here that verse no. 27 has stated that the realised ascetic's Pran or life forces leave his body through this aperture called the Brahm-Randhra. The reason is clear now—when the resonance of OM reaches a certain peak level, it creates such a crescendo of sound that the skull splits open due to the accumulated sound energy by overlapping sound waves.]

33. The area measuring thirty-and-a-half fingers width (i.e. the region approximately between the nostrils or upper lips and the lower end of the lungs) is the place where the Pran or breath lives and moves. This is the vital area of the body where the air or wind that keeps the body alive moves. If this air called the 'Pran' stops moving, i.e. if a man can't breathe fresh air, then the rest of the vital winds present inside the body would lose their importance and relevance for the simple reason that the body would be dead without breath. This part of the vital wind measuring 30 ½ fingers-width is the air that remains inside the body as opposite to the wind that is present outside the physical limits of the body. This air is not visible like the air that is present outside though both are called 'Pran' and are synonymous with breath. The air retained inside the body is however the one which is the foundation upon which the whole edifice of life rests though it cannot be seen or observed physically by the creature like the air present outside¹ (33).

[Note—¹The Pran or the vital air or wind element that sustains life inside the body but present outside it can be visually 'seen' as is evident when a mist forms outside the nose during cold weather or when breath is exhaled on a cold surface whereby a thin film of moisture collects on the cold surface. But no one can see the component of breath that is located inside the body. When one breathes, the internal air is not completely exhaled; some part is withheld inside the lungs and its tubes. This component is the Pran that is not visible, while the one that is exhaled is visible Pran.]

The word Pran has two connotations here—one refers to the 'breath' and the other to the vital 'life forces' that it sustains inside the body of the creature. The latter form of Pran is synonymous with consciousness because both are indicative of 'life'. This verse is dealing with this aspect of Pran. The next verse no. 34 will deal with the former aspect of Pran, i.e. with 'breath' as a synonym of Pran. Broadly speaking, the word refers to the vital air or wind element in the body or outside of it because no life can be sustained without the presence of vital gases such as oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen etc. which are inherently present in the air which we breathe in and breathe out daily.

The air we breathe is called Pran by the Upanishads because it is the fresh inhaled breath that injects 'life' in the otherwise lifeless body. The rest of the Prans, such as Apaana, Samaana, Vyaana and Udaana depend on this Pran to function and remain active, for what good are they in a dead body?]

34. The Pran that is external to the body—that form of Pran or vital wind that moves in and out of the body as compared to the Pran that cannot leave the body unless it dies—is represented by the cycle of inhaled and exhaled breath. During the course of one day and

one night, one takes approximately one lakh, thirteen thousand, six hundred and eighty breaths (i.e. 1,13,680 breaths) (34).

[Note—When one breathes, some part is always retained inside the body. This is the ‘internal Pran’. The ‘external Pran’ would then be the air that is inhaled and exhaled—the part of breath that is located just outside the nostrils. Usually it is believed that a man breathes approximately 21000 times during the course of a single day, so the figure of 1,13,680 mentioned here in this verse perhaps refers to a healthy man involved in strenuous exercises such as doing manual labour when he would breathe faster. Or it indicates the fact that this is the maximum number of breaths one can take in a day’s time.]

35. The primary and principal vital wind called ‘Pran’ lives in a subtle form in the subtle space of the heart (and keeps this organ functioning); the vital wind called ‘Apan’ lives in the region of the anus (and is responsible for excretion of the residue from the intestines); the ‘Saman’ wind is found in the navel region (because it is from here that all the nerves and veins in the body radiate out from the nerve center or core called the ‘Nabhi Kand’, and ensure that nutrients and other essential supplies are equally distributed in the body); the ‘Udan’ wind lives in the region of the throat (because this wind is synonymous with the notion of ‘getting up’ or ‘rising’, so it symbolises the creature’s state of wakefulness when he speaks out, and at the same time it helps it to ‘raise’ and spit out cough present in the lungs) (35).

36. The vital wind known as ‘Vyan’ spreads through the body (as it helps in maintaining equilibrium).

Now, the subtle colours of these five Prans symbolising the five forms in which the vital wind force in Nature exist are being mentioned (36).

37. The main Pran (breath which is at the core of life) is said to be red-coloured like a ruby. [This is a symbolic representation of the fact that this form of air is rich in oxygen, which in turn oxidizes the cells and help in producing red-blood corpuscles and hemoglobin in the body.]

The Apan wind present in the anus is like a red-coloured insect called ‘Indragop’ or an insect called ‘Birbahuti’ which has a scarlet colour like velvet and appears when the first rain falls. [That is why the anus region is red in colour, and malfunctioning of this vital wind creates piles which are red in colour, or bleeding dysentery or diarrhea which is also red in colour.] (37).

38. The Saman wind is located in the area of the navel and is said to be white like cow’s milk or alum. [This is indicative of the presence of mucous and lymph and other intercellular and inter-muscular fluids in the body which are not red in colour as blood is.]

The Udan wind is smoky and grey in colour (like the fluffy clouds floating across the sky). [And that is why the cough or mucous raised in the throat is predominantly of this colour.]

Finally, the Vyan wind has the glorious and splendid colour like the tip of the flame of a burning candle. [This indicates that the flame is steady and burning brightly, without being subjected to any disturbances from any external factor, such as a gust of

wind. Hence, this Vyan wind maintains a healthy and well-proportioned body which is not disturbed by any worldly influences. Such a healthy body has a radiant and glowing appearance, and its skin is taut and thus literally shines in the pink of its health.] (38).

39. Those wise, expert and spiritually realised ascetics who have trained their Pran to collect themselves from the different locations where they are present inside the body (as narrated above in verse nos. 35-36), and then move in a systematic and organised manner upwards (as described in verse nos. 26-27 and 31-32), by means of meditative practices, to collect in the head (in the region of the Brahm-Randhra), are able to ensure that wherever they die they would not have to take birth again. Indeed, they find their final redemption and salvation when they are able to felicitate the exit of their Pran from the body through the Brahm-Randhra and become one with the elements of Nature (as described in verse no. 27 above). Such an ascetic does not have to take a birth again; this is his final dissolution and liberation from the fetters of the body and the world. [That is, he has attained the best form of Mukti called the Kaivalya Mukti as mentioned in verse no. 30. This is because his vital winds known as Pran leave the body and merge with the cosmic air present outside his body, and when the Pran has left the body the latter disintegrates into its primary elements such as the earth, water and fire. With the barrier of the skin and bones gone, the space inside the body just merges with the open sky outside, leaving no trace of the ascetic any longer.]

This is the great and magnificent teaching of this Upanishad; this is the profound philosophy and secret it teaches (39).

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(IV—E) Kshuriko Upanishad

This Upanishad is so named because it advocates the employment of various Yoga practices to act like a ‘knife’ which cuts through the different hurdles in the seeker’s spiritual progress, and helps him to attain his objective of obtaining final liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle him to this body and the various torments that it is subjected to in this deluding world of artificiality.

Amongst the various paths of Yoga, it especially emphasises the importance and rewards of having a firm ‘Dharna’—i.e. firmness of mind and steadfastness of conviction; firm resolution and a determined pursuit of one’s spiritual goals by overcoming all hurdles that come in the way; to resolutely follow the principles of Yoga in order to achieve success in one’s spiritual path.

This Upanishad is highly Yoga-centric and describes in detail the process of ‘Pranayam’ (breath control) which helps in harnessing the stupendous potentials of the vital winds called Pran present inside the body and ensure that it gains sufficient energy to break through all the hurdles or barriers represented by blocked Naadis (the tubular ducts inside the body) that obstruct its free passage inside the body itself and its escape from the body to the outside space to merge with its primary form as the cosmic air or wind element at the time of death of the spiritual aspirant.

Since 'Pran' is a synonym for life and consciousness, when it is able to move freely and ultimately escape from the bondage of the gross body it is deemed that the practitioner of Yoga, who is a spiritual seeker, has obtained his final liberation from the fetters that tie him down to this body as well as the artificial world of delusions and numerous entrapments in which the soul has to live. He is delivered from their shackles once and for all, for the freed air element known as Pran no longer enters another body once it escapes from the previous one. This is the spiritual seeker's or ascetic's final and ultimate emancipation and salvation.

Besides controlling of the vital winds and their movement in the body, the other correlated benefit is the ability generated to exercise control over the restless mind and focus it in the direction that the aspirant wishes. This helps in concentration of the mind on the job at hand and achieve success in any enterprise.

The steps to be followed in doing Yoga, which are meditative exercises to control the vital wind called Pran, its movement upwards in the body, as well as the unclogging of the hitherto blocked Naadis, are described in graphic detail. With Naadis open, the vital winds can move freely inside the body, and with practice of Yoga sufficient energy is generated inside the body itself when the body is well ventilated. This stokes the latent fire present inside the body further, and the Pran winds move up the body to finally escape from it into the outer sky by rupturing the skull and escaping into the outer sky to merge and become one with the cosmic air or wind element present outside the body much like the heated air, in the form of steam, escapes from the spout of a kettle never to return into the body of the kettle again.

1. [This verse emphasises the importance of Dharna in Yoga or meditation.]

We shall now discuss the ways and means that helps a spiritual aspirant to obtain unequivocal success in doing Yoga (meditation). In this connection, 'Dharna'—or having a firm faith and conviction in its stupendous effects and glorious potentials, a resolute mind that remains steady and determined in its chosen path, a sincerity of purpose, and ability to resist all temptations—acts like a potent and powerful 'Kshuri' or knife because it helps him to cut through all the fetters that tie him down and prevent his liberation. Such a person who makes Dharna his weapon to aid and protect him in his spiritual progress attains success in obtaining final liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. [That is, such a person finds emancipation and salvation for his soul for good.] (1).

[Note—An ordinary man remains engrossed in his worldly activities, never finding time to contemplate on what lies beyond the mundane. He is so enchanted by the deluding mirage created by this fascinating world of kaleidoscopic colours that he has neither the time nor the inclination or the intention to look at the other side of it; he prefers to remain submerged in its transient and impermanent pleasures and comforts even at the cost of risking his long-term spiritual welfare. Numerous, endless and varied hopes, desires, aspirations and expectations pertaining to this world of material objects, and the pleasures and comforts derived from them, keep him entangled in their sticky net much like the spider remaining stuck in its own web.

In this connection there is a beautiful verse in the *Holy Quran* that says—"Allah hath sealed their hearing and their hearts, and on their eyes there is a covering. Theirs will be

an awful doom” (Surah ii, verse no. 7), and “These are they who purchase error at the price of guidance, so their commerce doth not prosper, neither are they guided” (Surah ii, verse no. 16).

On the other hand, a self-awakened man realises the futility of worldly pursuit because he knows that this world is illusionary, deluding, temporary and perishable, as compared to the actual ‘truth’ that is eternal and steady. But it is not easy to reach this ‘truth’ when one is surrounded by falsehoods and delusions. So such a man distances himself from the world and searches for that ‘truth’ which would give him real peace and happiness that is everlasting instead of the one obtained by pursuing this world, because such a peace and happiness is transient and illusive. The path to this ‘truth’ is a rigorous one, and it passes through a dense forest requiring strict self discipline and resistance to worldly temptations, as well as abstinence from all things that have to do with darkness symbolising ignorance and delusions. In this connection there is a beautiful verse in the *Holy Quran* that says—“And believe in that which I reveal, confirming that which ye possess already (of the scripture), and be not first to disbelieve therein, and part not with My revelation for a trifling price, and keep your duty to Me. Confound not the truth with the falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the truth” (Surah ii, verse no. 41-42).

Amongst the various options open to this spiritual aspirant is Yoga or meditation and contemplation. This Yoga is a very potent instrument that helps him effectively divert all his energy towards his chosen path of spiritual enlightenment as well as obtaining liberation and deliverance for his soul or Atma which is his pure and true ‘self’; it is an effective means in helping the aspirant in this endeavour. A person who practices Yoga is called a Yogi or an ascetic. Yoga is a spiritual science that establishes coordination between the pure conscious Atma (or soul) of the individual with the primary source from which this individual Atma had separated at the time of birth of the individual creature, thereby creating oneness between the two. Since a systematic and rational approach is needed to bring about an effective coordination and a final union between the individual’s Atma, which is the pure conscious ‘self’ and the truthful identity of the individual, and the cosmic Atma of the creation much like the merger of the water in a pot with the ocean which is the primary source of all water on earth, Yoga is called a ‘science’. As such, it has several well-designated and systematic steps towards the final goal of obtaining liberation by the pure conscious ‘spirit’ (soul or Atma) from the fetters that tie it down to this gross physical body, and emerge from it to become free like the cosmic wind or air element that pervades throughout the sky and which nothing can ever bind or enclose or capture in a sack. Yoga helps in this liberating and delivering exercise for the Atma or soul of the spiritual seeker.]

2-5. [These four verses describe the process of Pranayam* or breath control exercises that are integral to doing Yoga.]

It has been prescribed by the self-existent and self-begotten Brahma, the primary creator of the entire creation who is called ‘Swayambhu’ in the sense that he had no father or ancestor from whom he descended because he is said to be ‘self-created’, as well as extolled and ratified by the primary scriptures known as the Vedas, that the spiritual aspirant should do Yoga (meditation and contemplation) in a systematic way and according to the stipulated procedure. For this purpose, he should select a calm and serene place, free from all types of disturbances, whether mental or physical, and sit down in a proper sitting posture called Aasans¹.

He should put the wayward and wandering tendencies of the mind and heart, which are intrinsically restless and in a state of constant flux, under strict control and

tight leash by withdrawing his mind and heart from all worldly attractions and the distractions that they inherently create much like a tortoise withdrawing its limbs into its shell when it decides to do so².

This inhalation process is called 'Purak', meaning one that fills up. The time taken to inhale this breath should be equivalent to the time taken to mentally pronounce twelve Matras (letters or syllables) of Pranav, or the sublime and ethereal word OM³. During this process of inhaling air from the outside into the body, the practitioner should close all the so-called 'doors' or exit points in the body through which the wind could escape⁴.

The practitioner should sit ram-rod straight, with the spinal cord, the neck and the head in a straight line, and the chest fully expanded. While in this position, he should allow the inhaled wind to be retained in the body and spread through it. That is, the inhaled rejuvenating air is allowed to permeate throughout the body and get absorbed by the tissues. [This stage of Pranayam is called 'Khumbhak' or filling the pot. It is a metaphoric way of saying that the pot-like body is filled with fresh air after it is been emptied of stale air laden with all the gaseous impurities present in the body when it was exhaled earlier. This is done to oxidize every tissue and cell inside the body with fresh oxygen and energy, thereby stoking the inherent fire element present in these tissues and revitalizing them with new and fresh energy. It is like removing the covering ash from the pit of the sacrificial fire and blowing fresh air into the ambers lying underneath the ash to re-kindle the latent fire which had become dormant. This fire then jumps into life and burns with new vigour, thereby infusing new life into the body of the practitioner.]

Finally, when the body has sufficiently absorbed fresh oxygen present in the inhaled air and all the tissues and cells freshly revitalized by it, the different toxins and other impurities present in these tissues and cells are then expelled as noxious gases from them and collected by the residual air which has now become polluted and needs to be expelled from the body. This is done by exhaling it through the nostrils slowly in the reverse process. [This reverse process is called 'Rechak'.] (2-5).

[Note—**Pranyam* is central to Yoga practices and all the Upanishads dealing with Yoga deal with it in one or the other context. Refer to Sam Veda's Yog Chudamani and Jabal Darshan, Shukla Yajur Veda's Trishikhi Brahmin, and Krishna Yajur Veda's Amrit Naad, Yog Tattva, Dhayan Bindu and Tejo Bindu Upanishads.

¹The proper sitting postures or *Aasans* for doing Yoga (meditation and contemplation) and practicing Pranayam (breath control) have been described in Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 19. The complete process of Pranayam is dealt with in this Upanishad in substantial detail.

²In other words, he should prevent his thoughts and emotions from spreading out into the world of material sense objects like the tentacles of an octopus, and then get entangled in them and remain entangled. Then he should inhale the outside air representing the cosmic life-giving wind element metaphorically called the Atma because it infuses a fresh lease of life into the otherwise inane and inert gross body of the aspirant. [In other words, inhaling air is like blowing fresh air into the furnace of life burning inside the body of the aspirant and kindling the 'fire of life' which has become weak without proper ventilation. Inhaling air or the wind element is like giving the Atma, which is pure consciousness and the true identity of the aspirant, a fresh lease of life by stoking the latent 'fire element' which keeps it energised.

The 'inhalation of fresh air' is a metaphoric way of saying that the spiritual aspirant imbibes eclectic virtues and qualities that are exemplarily auspicious and noble by

remaining ever vigilant and conscious towards what is right and what is not. This acceptance of good and noble from the outside world is equivalent to 'breathing in fresh air or the Purak' phase of Pranayam. Now, when good ideas and virtues enter the inner self of the aspirant and are retained by him instead of just letting them pass off as a transient change then they are bound to have a permanent positive effect on his overall personality, mentality and temperament. This is equivalent to the 'holding of breath or the Kumbhak' phase of Pranayam. It is obvious that when good and positive virtues are in the ascendant the bad and negative ones would be on the decline; when fresh air enters a closed room the stale air is pushed out. This is equivalent to 'exhaling of breath or the Rechak' phase of Pranayam.]

³The word OM has three basic letters, viz. A, U and M. Therefore, pronouncing the *twelve Matras of OM* would here mean that the word is said four times—3 Matras x 4 times = 12 Matras. Refer also Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse nos. 24 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

⁴The symbolic *doors* of the body are the following—two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, one urethra and one Brahm Randhra (the hair-like slit on the top of the head).]

6-7. When the practitioner has developed sufficient expertise in controlling his vital winds called Pran by doing Pranayam in the way described above, and is able to concentrate the Pran consciously in any part of the body where he wishes it to be willingly focused, he should consciously feel that this Pran is moving or pulsating or radiating up and down two times in the region of the leg between the tip of the toes and the ankle joints (during the Kumbhak phase). That is, he consciously and willingly allows his mind to visualise that there is a sensation of conscious life pulsating or radiating solely in the foot between the tip of the toes and the ankle joints in a wave like fashion to the exclusion of any other parts of the body.

Then he draws his attention to the region of the leg between the ankle joints and the knees, and visualises that this region is the only conscious part of the body. He consciously allows his mind to perceive the existence of consciousness exclusively in this region of the body. He feels that life is pulsating in wave like pattern between his knees and ankle region, and moving up and down three times (during the Kumbhak phase).

Moving upwards, he then focuses his attention in the region between the hip joint and the knees. He allows his mind to visualise that conscious life is radiating up and down in this region in a wave like pattern two times.

Then he should shift his attention to the area between the anus and the genitals and visualise this area as the center of consciousness radiating in it. Here, the Pran is visualised as moving between the anus and the genitals in a wave three times.

Pulling up the vital winds upwards, they should be concentrated in the region of the navel, and the practitioner of Yoga should imagine that all the vital factors of life inside his body are concentrated here (6-7).

[Note—This process helps in training the mind to be focused on the job at hand, and learn not to be distracted by anything else. By pinpointing the presence of consciousness in a specific part of the body to the exclusion of any other part is a difficult proposition and requires a lot of practice. It is like training the wild horse or elephant to obey the command of its master.]

8. In this region of the navel, there is a cluster of Naadis (tubular ducts; the nerves and veins). The chief amongst them is called 'Sushumna' and it is surrounded by ten other Naadis such as Ida, Pingla etc. These Naadis are micro-fine in dimension and have different colours, such as red, yellow, dark hues, copper-coloured (8).

9. One should allow his Pran or vital winds to move amongst these Naadis just like a spider moves along the fibers created by its own saliva that forms the web on which this insect moves. [This helps to rejuvenate the Naadis, or nerves and veins, by shaking them out of their inertial mode of inactivity and lethargy, ventilating them and activating the latent energy lying dormant in them due to their being clogged and lying inactive out of long-lasting inertia and poor upkeep which has made them full of toxins and other harmful chemicals].

While at it, the wise and expert practitioner should carefully channelise his Pran into that Naadi which is very subtle, micro-fine and white or grey in colour (i.e. the Sushumna Naadi) (9).

10. Above the navel region, the next most important and glorious region in the body is known as the 'lotus' in the Upanishads. [This is because the pure consciousness called the Atma or soul of the creature has its divine and exalted location here.] This is the region of the heart. This area is radiant like a vibrant and blooming red lotus flower (10).

11. After ventilating all the Naadis present in the region of the heart, the Pran wind moves ahead from here and reaches the region of the throat. [That is, the practitioner of Yoga consciously feels that his vital winds have moved up from the lower part of the body and are moving in the throat. His mind is focused in this region to the exclusion of all other parts. He visualises that consciousness is pulsating in his throat region; all other parts of the body are lifeless now for all practical purposes for his mind.]

Above this is the area of the subtle mind called Mana, and above it is the region of the subtle intellect called Buddhi. This intellect or Buddhi is most potent, powerful, sharp and penetrating; it is pure, untainted and uncorrupt in its primary and natural form; it is most magnificent and mysterious in its actions and behaviour (11).

12. The practitioner of Yoga should now concentrate his mind on the private parts located in the region between the two thighs (i.e. the genitals). This area is called 'Indra-Vajra'¹. This area is to be mentally controlled or literally 'ruptured or bored through' by diligent efforts and a determined will power².

This control of the genital and its natural source of stupendous creative energy which is inherently present in all the living beings enable the ascetic to harness sufficient energy and stamina to move his Pran or consciousness to the next step in his Yoga practice. So he should now move his vital Pran or life forces upwards from the genitalia and let the Pran enter the four sensitive areas³ above it by rupturing through them. [In other words, the vital winds are allowed to stoke the hitherto dormant energy centers located in these four areas, thereby igniting the latent fire element present there and unleashing its stupendous potentials and powers.] (12-14).

[Note—¹The word *Indra Vajra* refers to the hardened and invincible weapon of the king of Gods known as Indra. In the present context, the word is used to symbolise the male phallus.

²In other words, the aspirant should learn to exercise strict control over his natural sexual impulses and ensure that this organ does not cause any emotional or physical discomfort to him in his rigorous meditative and contemplative exercises. Of all the natural impulses, this impulse of sexual arousal is the most difficult to resist and control. If the ascetic is successful in exercising control over his sexual instincts, he is not only able to concentrate better on his spiritual practices but also preserve his vital energy more effectively from being wasted away, and thereby divert it in more constructive channels and spiritual activities. 'Rupturing or boring thorough or breaking in' means to overcome the impenetrable fortress-like shell representing a creature's formidable and virtually irresistible natural sexual inclinations that are inherent to all the living beings, and thereby preventing this sexual instinct from getting aroused or activated, and raising its ugly hood to create unnecessary disturbance to the mental poise and mental concentration of the spiritual aspirant, causing undue hindrance in his path and obstructing his progress to reach his desired objective in life. Thus, rupturing or breaking of this hardened shell of formidable sexual instincts having their physical location in the region of the genitals is a metaphoric way of saying that the ascetic has overcome one last strong resistance to his spiritual liberation and enlightenment.

He should consciously fix his attention in this region of the genitals between the thighs, and consciously withhold or harness the energy of his vital life forces. That is, by observing self control over his sexual urges, by diligently following the principles of abstinence and continence, the ascetic is able to accumulate a great reservoir of energy within himself which he can use to divert his Pran from wasting its vital resources and energy in pursuing pleasures of the senses and gratification of sexual impulses to more nobler and higher objectives in life.

³The four vital energy centers that are expected to be ruptured are the four 'Chakras' located in the region of the body above the genitals. These Chakras are whirling subtle energy centers in the body where great energy is lying trapped. The main objective of meditative exercises is to unleash this astounding source of subtle energy lying dormant in the body of an ordinary man, but activated in the body of a successful practitioner of Yoga. By activating these subtle energy centers, the ascetic or any practitioner of Yoga is able to master great mystical powers and authority that can be used by him for his own spiritual upliftment as well as for doing something good for others by being a source of their inspiration and moral guidance. It enables the practitioner to perform certain tasks that the ordinary man is not able to do with the limitations of his physical body.

The heated and energised and specially empowered vital winds are able to penetrate these four energy centers and help release their energy. The four Chakras are Muladhar Chakra located in the region of the genital, Nabhi Chakra located in the navel region, Anahat Chakra located in the chest region in the vicinity of the heart, and Kantha Chakra located in the throat.

Earlier it has been said in verse nos. 6-11 that the Pran representing consciousness should be diligently and consciously moved up from the lower region of the body to the throat, traversing the navel and heart regions one by one. Now, this present verse nos. 12-14 clarifies what is meant by 'consciously' moving it up. It means that all the vital energy centers located in these regions are activated by being stoked by the vital wind forces moving around them much like a dormant fire in an oven is aroused when fresh wind or air is blown into it.]

15-16. Then the ascetic should diligently move the vital winds in the cluster of Naadis present in the throat. [That is, he should visualise that his consciousness is pulsating in the region of the throat where the energy center called Kantha Chakra is located.] This

cluster has one hundred one Naadis. They trap within themselves the most stupendous and magnificent source of divine and supernatural energy called 'Para Shakti'¹.

Some of the great Naadis located here are the Sushumna Naadi which remains perpetually submerged in the bliss obtained by realisation of the supreme transcendental Truth (and if the Pran enters this Naadi, it obviously also gets submerged in an everlasting ocean of bliss and contentedness that comes with realisation of the ultimate Truth). The Naadi called Virjaa is directly linked to the supreme Brahm (i.e. it has direct link with the supreme consciousness residing in the body of the individual creature, and when this Naadi is activated the individual can have direct access to that consciousness). The other two important Naadis here are called Ida which is located to the left side of the throat, and Pingla that is located in the right side of the throat. [These two Naadis move up to the nostrils located in their respective sides.] (15-16).

[Note--¹This *Paraa Shakti* represents the supernatural transcendental dynamic powers of the pure conscious Atma, and it is revealed in the form of the ability of the man to 'speak'. This is because the very first sign of creation coming into being is deemed to be the 'Naad' or the cosmic sound element that was generated when there was some activity in the calm surface of the cosmic ether. This Naad was envisioned as the first cosmic movement in the otherwise calm and tranquil ether which created a ripple that formed into a wave moving across the surface of ether, causing energy to be generated, which in due course powered the cosmic dynamo at the time of the initial phases of creation at the time of its very beginning. Naad was conceptualised as the word OM, and the whole gamut of spoken language is incorporated in the basic sound created when this OM is pronounced. So, the 'voice' or 'sound' generated in the throat of a living being is the most evident and irrefutable proof of the supreme Consciousness, which is responsible for the unfolding of this entire creation, being present inside the body of the individual.]

17. Between these two Naadis (i.e. between the Ida and Pingla Naadis) is the one Naadi which is considered the best and the most magnificent one amongst all the Naadis from the spiritual perspective¹. A wise and expert practitioner of Yoga who is acquainted with this Naadi is deemed to be knowledgeable about the Vedas and their tenets. He is deemed to have acquired truthful knowledge and understood the real meaning and purpose of the doctrines of the Vedas and other scriptures, such as the Upanishads. [This is because the main thrust of Vedic and Upanishadic teaching is to provide liberation and deliverance to the soul of the spiritual aspirant. Since this Naadi, called the Sushumna Naadi, helps in achieving this aim, it follows therefore that a person who has been able to gain access to this Naadi by means of Yoga and Dharna (strict self discipline, singularity of purpose, diligent practice of various tenets and doctrines with a steady mind and firm determination, and having unwavering faith and conviction in the teachings of the scriptures) is the one who has realised the main objective of studying and preaching of the Vedas and the Upanishads by finding the ultimate emancipation and salvation for himself, i.e. for his Atma—which is pure consciousness and synonymous with his Pran or vital life forces, as well as is his true identity—by breaking free from the fetters of this gross body and escaping from its enclosure to mingle and inseparably merge with the primary air or wind element which pervades uniformly in the cosmic space outside the limitations set by the physical structure of the body.]

There are said to be a total of seventy two thousand fine Naadis in the body². These are called 'Taitil' (17).

[Note--¹This *Naadi* is called the Sushumna Naadi which goes up to the Brahm-Randhra and provides liberation to the diligent practitioner of Yoga when his 'Pran Yau' or his vital winds, along with his consciousness representing all his vital functions and life in its entirety, makes its exit from the body through this hair-like slit located at the top of the skull. According to the philosophy of Yoga, this Sushumna Naadi is the only duct in the body which can provide liberation to the practitioner's soul when the latter rides piggy-back on the vital winds as they find their way inside this duct from its lower end at the base of the spine, at the place called the Kundalini, and then, pushed up by the energy released from this ruptured Kundalini, sneaks up this Sushumna Naadi to finally reach the top of the head where the Brahm-Randhra is located. Finally, when the Pran is sufficiently heated and energised by constant practice of Yoga (physical exercises of meditation) and Pranayam (breath control and harnessing the latent energy of the wind element), it manages to rupture or split open this aperture and escape from the body into the outer free cosmic space. This is just like a prisoner escaping from the walls of the prison and set free in the outer world. Refer verse nos. 18-19.

²The Jabal Darshan Upanishad and Yogchudamani Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition, the Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, and the Yog tattva, Tejo Bindu and Dhyana Bindu Upanishads of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition are amongst the major Upanishads which deal with this concept of the Naadis and Yoga.]

18-19. 'Dhyana Yoga', literally meaning meditative exercises done by intense concentration of the mind and use its energy as if it were a sharp-edged knife (much like the use of laser beams to perform complicated surgery in modern medicine), can be employed by the practitioner of Yoga (i.e. by the seeker of true liberation and deliverance) to rupture or pierce through or bore into all the Naadis and let the Pran enter them. But the Sushumna Naadi is the only one which cannot be broken through or its sanctity violated¹.

A wise and sagacious person is one who pierces all the Naadis in this life itself. This is to ensure that his Pran or vital winds and life forces present in his body, which had been till now wandering aimlessly in the subtle space inside the gross body, is able to enter into these ducts and move up the correct path that can lead to its proper destination. Since the wind trapped inside the body has originated from the all-pervading free wind or air element present in the cosmic space, its 'natural destination' is this cosmic space, and its 'liberation' is its escape from the enclosure of the gross body and mingling with the parent body of the cosmic wind outside. This is its final 'deliverance' from all artificial entrapments created by the gross body because once outside, the air element would merge indistinguishably with the cosmic wind element and lose its independent identity. A realised ascetic allows this to happen when he uses the will power and determination of his mind to forcefully make his Pran to bore into the various Naadis, and move inside them. Once inside, the energised and heated Pran unclogs all the veins and nerves by its mere power of force and de-toxifying abilities, and moves freely inside them. It gradually moves up the body much like hot air, allowed to enter a network of tubes, has a propensity to move freely inside them and head upwards because of the fact that any hot air moves up and not down. Pran, being lighter or 'subtler' than all the other elements in the body because it now resembles hot and energised air or vital wind element, has overcome all resistance and is able to enter that path that leads to arousal of the hitherto dormant spiritual energy lying trapped in the heart as the pure consciousness of the creature. Determined and steadfast practice of meditation, along with contemplation on

the main objective of doing Yoga and concentrating upon the Truth, keeps the ascetic firmly on his path.

In its final leg, the Pran is able to sufficiently gather enough energy and force and momentum to unfurl the energy in the coiled Kundalini² at the bottom of the spine. When the Pran sneaks into it, it finds entry into the Sushumna Naadi which has its lower end blocked by this Kundalini. Heated vital winds then snake up this tube, much like mercury moving up the thermometer, and finally reach the top of the head at the spot called the Brahm-Randhra. When the pressure builds up, the final explosion occurs, and this Brahm-Randhra splits open, allowing the Pran to escape into the outer space for ever. This stage is called 'Kaivalya Mukti', or the 'one of its kind' of liberation and deliverance for the aspirant seeking freedom, because once the Pran merges with the cosmic wind or air element, there is no question of its re-entering the body. This is because the body of such an ascetic is allowed to disintegrate into its basic elements, such as the earth, water and fire. The subtle space inside the body would then automatically coalesce with the open space outside. No trace of the earlier creature remains. This is obviously the final closure of the scene for him.

Thus, the wise and sagacious practitioner of Yoga should use the inviolable authority and majestic influence of his Atma, i.e. the astounding supernatural power of the pure conscious 'self', to firmly direct and strictly order the mind and the intellect to use their stupendous abilities and skills along with the energised and heated vital winds called Pran present inside the body to jointly rupture and bore through the different Naadis and penetrate them. That is, the wise ascetic uses the stupendous and powerful authority inherently bestowed in his own 'self', called his pure conscious Atma, to diligently and purposefully divert all the efforts of the two powerful instruments that he has at his disposal, i.e. the Mana (mind) and the Pran (vital winds and other life forces inside the body), to actively practice strict Yoga (as described in this Upanishad).

This Yoga practice then becomes as potent, powerful and effective as a heated sharp-edged knife or 'Kshuri' that enables the ascetic to symbolically cut through the Naadis in a surgical and precise fashion. The revitalizing Pran then enters them and completely fills them. Then the Naadis become as vibrant and invigorated as the healthy Jasmine flower which gives out a sweet fragrance typical of it (18-19).

[Note--¹In other words, since this Sushumna Naadi symbolically represents the eternal and irrefutable Truth in creation, and remains soaked in its exuberant glory as mentioned in verse no. 16 above, it is impossible to subdue it and cause any disturbance in its serenity. This is a metaphoric way of saying that once the ascetic reaches that stage of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation when he has realised the actual Truth and the eternal fount of beatitude and felicity attendant with it, no force in creation can ever sway him from his exalted stature. He is deemed to have reached the pinnacle of spiritual achievement where he becomes invincible for the myriad temptations and delusions surging in the world which drown all other creatures in their swirling whirlpool.

The word *pierce* when used in the spiritual context is to overcome the resistance of the physical body and its various components, including the Naadis, to any effort that causes inconvenience or discomfort to it. Yoga is a rigorous self-disciplining spiritual exercise that does not compromise on principles. Since the body is accustomed to remaining engrossed in comforts and enjoying pleasures emanating from the material world, it is natural for it to resist any change in the status and be subjected to control and discipline. The Naadis are singled out for such 'piercing or rupturing' or vanquishing or overcoming or subduing because it is through the network of Naadis that the body keeps

itself alive as consciousness flows through them. The Naadis carry sense impulses from one part of the body to the other; it is through them that the blood flows; it is through the Naadis that the mind is able to receive the sensory inputs from the sense organs located on the surface of the body and then help the body to respond; it is the Naadis which are like the central network of wires and circuits of an electronic equipment. If the Naadis are blocked or made to stop working, the body would be as good as dead. Hence, the best way to control the entire edifice of the body is to control its command and control network in the form of the Naadis.

²*Kundalini*—The Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-16 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition is dedicated entirely on this concept of Kundalini. Other major Upanishads that deal with the topic of Yoga also deal with the concept of Kundalini because both are intertwined concepts.]

20. In this way, the wise ascetic should properly understand how to establish his control over the different Naadis, those which are conducive to his spiritual upliftment and therefore considered 'Shubh' or auspicious (such as the Virja, Pingla and Ida Naadis mentioned in verse no. 16) as well as those which relate more to his worldly interactions and mundane existence (such as the Naadis that control his digestive, excretory and reproductive functions).

The Sushumna Naadi is superior to all the Naadis in the body, and the wise and sagacious ascetic is one who focuses his attention on this Naadi. That is, he diligently practices to divert his Pran (vital winds and life-infusing conscious factors) into this duct and channelise the Pran's energy into activating it so that the Pran can ultimately reach the point on the top of the head, the Brahm-Randhra, from where it can finally make its exit from the body for good, thereby liberating the ascetic from the shackle of the gross body for ever, and delivering his soul from the compulsion of having to live in this body to the accompaniment of its associated torments.

When his attention is exclusively and firmly fixed on this Sushumna Naadi, he obtains access to the supreme transcendental Brahm representing the eternal fount of truth, beatitude and felicity. This achievement provides him with permanent liberation and deliverance from the body. In other words, he does not have to take birth again with a body¹ (20).

[Note--¹This is because he has already detached himself from all the deeds done by the body, being totally unattached with the latter, and not-involved in the world in which the body lives, thereby freeing him from either being associated with these deeds and their consequences, whether good or bad, or with any of the entrapments of the world and the latter's tainting effects. He has also realised the delusory nature of the artificial world of material objects, and therefore has lost all charms and attractions for it along with the material comforts and sensual pleasures that it offers to the creature. With no baggage of insatiate desires and yearnings, no unfulfilled aspirations and hopes, he has nothing pending and unfulfilled at the time of death for which he would want to take another birth in order to finish off his incomplete tasks or fulfill his dreams. This state of total and sincere renunciation entitles him to become a 'liberated' soul, and since 'soul' is an disembodied ethereal body of infinite cosmic proportions, being another form of the cosmic wind or air element, it simply coalesces with this element as soon as the ascetic dies and the Pran leaves the gross body by rupturing the skull at the point of the Brahm-Randhra.

In this context, refer Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 27, and Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17 both of which belong to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

21. A person who has won control over his mind and intellect by strict diligence and discipline, who has been able to effectively control his senses and has learnt to focus his attention at the place he wishes it to be focused instead of becoming a mute spectator and a humble serf of the natural wayward and wandering tendencies of the mind as well of the various sense organs, who has inculcated the habit of self-restraint and self-discipline, who has vanquished his natural instincts and willingness of the body and the mind to become prey to delusions and illusive charms of this world—such a person should move to a calm, quiet, serene and uninhabited place where there is no disturbance of any kind, physical or mental.

In such an environment conducive to spiritual upliftment, he should practice meditation and contemplation which enables him to establish a union or coordination between his own consciousness (Atma) and the cosmic Consciousness that pervades throughout the creation as the eternal, ubiquitous and quintessential Truth. This is called 'Nishang Tattwa Yoga'¹ because it involves the application of the principles of Yoga (both physical exercises of meditation and its mental aspect that helps to fix attention on some high and noble objective using the method of contemplation, deliberation and research) to arrive at the elementary principles of Nature that are irrefutable, unequivocal truths do not need props to support them.

By constant and diligent practice of this type of Yoga, he should become totally neutral and full of equanimity, dissociating himself from both the gross body as well as the world. He should be dispassionate towards everything in this world. [In other words, it should not matter to him whether he dies or lives, whether his body suffers or enjoys the comforts of the world, and whether or not the world exists at all.] (21).

[Note--¹The word *Nishang* (or *Nishung*) means without any accompaniments; with no support and help; lonely and one of its kind. The word *Tattwa* means the underlying principle of anything in existence; the essential and fundamental aspect of anything; the basics of any entity; the essence; the 'principal principles' of any philosophy. *Yoga* of course means to bring about a union or establishing coordination between two entities; the practice of meditation and contemplation; the physical exercises involved in these practices as well as the mental abilities to contemplate, deliberate and research and arrive at the desired results.]

22. Even as a Swan flies off into the vast sky after breaking free from the net which had kept it imprisoned, a wise and enlightened living being (the 'Jiva'; in this case the ascetic or a practitioner of Yoga) is able to break free from all the fetters that shackle him to this artificial deluding world resembling a vast, fathomless and seemingly un-crossable ocean with its rapidly swirling whirlpools, endless stretch and numerous other hurdles which literally keep the creature trapped and hallucinating in their midst¹.

Practice of Yoga as described in this Upanishad enables the creature to overcome these insurmountable hurdles and finally cross over this ocean-like world and become free for all times to come (22).

[Note—¹Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 5, 8 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. In it the world is compared to a surging river and this metaphor is beautifully employed to describe the horrific characteristics of this world.]

23. Even as the flame of the oil-lamp exhausts all the oil and burns down its wick at the time of its final dissolution into the fire element (i.e. like the time when the flame finally flickering away and dying when all the oil is exhausted and even the wick has been burnt to ashes, leaving nothing behind), the realised and acclaimed Yogi (ascetic) also burns all his deeds and their associated results, good or bad, in the powerful fire of Yoga (meditation and contemplation)¹ to obtain final liberation and deliverance from this body by merging his soul or pure conscious 'self' represented by his life-giving vital winds called Pran into the eternal and infinite cosmic Consciousness which is the supreme transcendental 'truth' and the essential primary 'element' in creation from which all other things have emerged. This is called his 'Nirvan' or final emancipation and salvation from where there is no return (23).

[Note—¹See note to verse no. 20.]

24. A wise, erudite and expert ascetic who has sharpened his knife symbolising his steady mind and sharp intellect as well as firmness of conviction and a determined will, by rubbing this knife vigorously against the stone symbolising profound renunciation and total detachment from anything related to this world and the body, employing the powerful force associated with Pranayam done by using the ethereal word OM for the purpose of rubbing the knife against this stone, is not only able to cut through all the fetters symbolising various faults associated with this perishable world of material objects and artificiality but also ensures that no fetter pertaining to this delusory and entrapping world would ever trap him in its tentacles (24).

25. When that self-realised and wise man has abandoned all his desires and yearnings pertaining to this world, he would not have any kind of expectations and hopes from it. [That is, when he has no desires, no wishes, no longings, no aspirations and no greed, he would not expect any return for the deeds done by him with his body. This makes him greatly dispassionate towards the world and detached from its entrapping enticements.]

When he is not under any delusions, when he has no worldly obligations to fulfill which might force him to bend rules and do things even unwillingly, when he is not deluded by foisted false promises of getting imaginary happiness and joy emanating from this perishable world, and mislead by illusionary sources of Amrit (which is the ambrosia of eternal beatitude and felicity), it is only then he can sincerely pursue the path of spiritualism that leads to the truthful source of Amrit. In other words, he acquires the mystical ability to ferret out the 'truth' from the labyrinthine alleys of illusions and falsehoods that are the hallmarks of this artificial world and its material objects of comfort and pleasure.

This truthful source of Amrit provides him real and eternal beatitude and felicity. Such a realised and fortunate ascetic does not get tied to any fetters any longer, or be ever shackled to this body or the world. Nothing can trap him; nothing can tie him down. This is verily what this Upanishad proclaims; this is its profound and glorious teaching (25).

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(IV—F) Shwetashwatar Upanishad (Canto 2)

This is one of those Upanishads which are exclusively dedicated to the theme of Brahm and repeatedly stress the importance of realising this grand quintessential Absolute Truth of existence. It is to be noted that this Upanishad espouses the philosophy of Sankhya Shastra and Sankhya Yoga, and elucidates their fundamental principles.

It was first revealed to the great sage-cum-seer named Shwetashwatar (6/21), and hence it bears his name.

Canto 1 describes succinctly about the Atma, the pure conscious ‘self’ both at the individual level of the creature as well as the universal level of the cosmos or creation. There are two beautiful analogies of the *wheel* and the *river* to explain the fundamental principles.

Canto 2 is dedicated to the praise of the Sun as a giver of life and a visible manifestation of the supreme Brahm. It goes on to describe the basic steps in Yoga (meditation exercises).

Cantos 3 to 6 are fully dedicated to enumerate the long eclectic list of the divine virtues and qualities of the Supreme Being. It also outlines the principles of *Sankhya Shastra* and *Sankhya Yoga*, as has been explicitly stated in 6/1-3 and 6/13. This school of spiritual philosophy was first propounded by sage Kapil to whom this profound knowledge was revealed by the supreme Brahm himself (5/2).

The metaphor of *two birds* sitting on a tree has been beautifully employed to describe the relationship between the Jivatma (the creature) and the Parmatma (the Supreme Being, the Lord of creation) in Canto 4, verse nos. 6-7.

The cycle of birth and death has been called the giant *Brahm-Chakra* or the wheel rotated by the supreme Brahm (6/1-2), and the cycle of deeds and their unavoidable consequences as the great *Karma Chakra* (6/3). The process of evolution has been also outlined in Canto 5, verse nos. 10-12.

In short, this unique Upanishad brings profound ‘truths’ of creation and existence to the fore in a very effective and succinct manner. Each observation about the divinity and supremacy of Brahm as well as about what is the irrefutable Truth is emphasised by way of repetition to drive home the point that what is being said is indeed the Truth.

We should note here that the basic tenets of the Upanishads have a striking similarity to the religio-philosophical beliefs of the great Christian saint named *Thomas Aquinas*. An entire set of religious doctrines based on his philosophy of the soul, human knowledge and God is known as *Thomism*. St Thomas was born 1224/25 A.D. and died 7 March, 1274. He was a leading philosopher and theologian of the Catholic Church and taught at the University of Paris. He was a prolific writer and penned about eighty great books on the subject of theology and philosophical aspects of religion. One of his great works is *Summa Theologica* which he wrote between 1265-73, and was his last major treatise on religious philosophy. His profound doctrine is known as *Thomism*. This is a philosophical and theological system developed by him which has great similarity with the philosophy of the Upanishads. Briefly it states that ‘the human soul is immortal and a unique subsistent form, that all human knowledge is based on sensory perceptions that are experienced by him but it also depends upon the mind’s reflective capacity, and that

all creature's have a natural tendency to love God that can be perfected and elevated by grace and application'.

In the context of our present reading, we should use the word 'application' as the practical method of Yoga and other means adopted by an aspirant to realise the supreme truth of the soul by focusing the mind exclusively on it, and the 'God' referred by Thomas is the supreme transcendental Brahm of the Upanishads. The rest of the things automatically fall into their right place.

Since our present book is dedicated to the theme of "Yoga", hence only Canto 2 is being narrated herein below, and the rest of the text of this excellent Upanishad is skipped.

Canto 2

[This Canto is dedicated to the worship of the Sun God called Savita. The Sun is obviously the harbinger and herald of life as no life is tenable in this world without the kind grace and the benevolent mercy of the Sun. The Sun sustains and nourishes life, providing it with light, heat and energy which are the basic prerequisites for life to survive on this planet. The Sun God has been honoured in another Upanishad especially dedicated to Savita, and it is 'Savitriyu-panishad' of the Sam Veda tradition.

This Canto describes how one can utilise the stupendous potentials of meditation to harness the energy of the spirit for one's liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle him to this world ridden with ignorance and delusions.]

1. Let the Sun God called Savita¹ divert our mind and intellect towards the Supreme Being (Brahm, representing auspiciousness and noble values) along with redirecting the energy of all our sense organs so that instead of pursuing and remaining hitched to the mundane and artificial objects of this perishable world they are directed to nobler objectives of life and inculcate auspicious values.

Let these sense organs be infused with the brilliant light that is inherent to the fire element so that we can see the reality and truth in this world². (1).

[Note--¹*Savita*—appears first in the Rig Veda, 1/24/3-4. He is the Sun God who provides the creation with virtuous, noble, auspicious and righteous inspirations symbolised by the brilliant light that emanates from the Sun. The nascent Sun at the time of dawn before its disc appears blazingly splendid in the sky is also known as Savita (Sayan Bhasya on Rig Veda, 5/81/4). This phase of the Sun is chosen because it goes on increasing in its radiance and splendour by the passage of each moment. Savita moves between the earth and the heavens, i.e. in the solar system. Being the sustainer of life as the Sun, Savita is also regarded as the father of the Gods (Shathpath Brahmin, 1/1/2/17). Along with Varun, the God of water, he is regarded as the King of the entire realm of creation (Shathpath Brahmin, 11/4/3/14). This is obvious because water and heat are the prerequisites for life. He is also one of the Adityas (mythological Suns). Rig Veda has 11 Suktas or hymns devoted to him. The famous Gayatri and Savitri Mantras are dedicated to this God known as Savita (Yajur Veda, 36/3).

²That is, let these sense organs of perception abandon their natural tendency of getting attracted towards the illusionary charms of the world and thereby trapping us in their endless snares, but instead help us to perceive the world in the correct perspective

and see that what is apparent on the surface is all falsehood and non-truth. Let these organs acquire the ability to restrain themselves from becoming indulgent and stop yearning for the comforts and pleasures of this artificial world and its sense objects, and instead concentrate upon what is the Truth and Reality in creation. This stanza also implies that these organs should be injected with fresh energy, strength and vitality so that they remain always alert and vigilant towards spiritual and nobler pursuits instead of getting sucked into the quagmire of enjoying the sensual pleasures proffered by their respective sense objects in the world. The Sun God is requested to rejuvenate these sense organs so that they do not become indolent and run-down.

Light is needed to see anything. The 'light' that is being referred here is the light of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment and the ability to discriminate between what is wrong and what is right. Though these are the functions of the mind, when these terms are applied to the sense organs they imply that these organs are properly trained and skilled in the task they are assigned to carry out for the creature—which is to 'correctly perceive' the world. These organs are like the sentries at the gate of the fort; if they are not properly trained or are corrupt then the security and integrity of city would be compromised. Incompetent or improperly trained soldiers are more dangerous than a powerful enemy.

The 'fire' referred to in this stanza is the rigorous training of the sense organs and their inherent strength, vigour and power to resist numerous temptations and other allurements that are offered by their respective objects in this world. Even as the fire can burn to ashes anything put in it, the properly trained and wise sense organs can reduce all impurities in the way of wrong and corrupted stimuli that try to enter the creature's inner self through the five doorways that these organs guard. That is, the eye would resist the temptation to see things not worth seeing, the ears would abstain from hearing things not worth hearing, the nose would run away from things that are not worth smelling, the tongue would abhor things not worth tasting, and the skin would desist from touching and feeling things not worthy of touching and feeling. Anything that would be demeaning for the exalted stature of the creature's true self called the Atma, which is the supreme Brahm personified and the most highly placed entity in the hierarchy of creation, is to be regarded as not being worthy to be accepted by any of the sense organs simply because these sense organs as well as their senior counterpart the mind-intellect are actually working on behalf of this Atma. They should not do anything that would reflect badly on the governance of the kingdom presided over by this Atma.]

2. Let us diligently and with great devotion make sincere efforts to please Savita by doing auspicious deeds (such as doing fire sacrifices) so that by this God's kind grace and divine intercession we can realise the ultimate Truth and its accompanying experience of heavenly happiness and bliss (2).

3. Let that Savita (the Sun God), who moves majestically across the sky and illuminates the vast realm of the creation with his brilliant light, inspire the patron Gods of all our sense organs as well as our mind and intellect so that they move towards light (of truth and knowledge, and away from darkness of ignorance and delusions).

[That is, let the patron God of light, i.e. the Sun God, bless us and inspire us to move on the path of auspiciousness, righteousness, wisdom and enlightenment, and away from the path of darkness representing delusions and ignorance which is just the opposite of it. Let us be wise and enlightened instead of being deluded and ignorant. Let our lives

be lighted with knowledge and wisdom instead of being shrouded in a dark veil of delusions and ignorance.] (3).

4. Those exalted Brahmins (senior and learned men) who devote the efforts of their mind and sense organs towards worshipping and attaining the Supreme Being should offer sincere prayers and pay high respect to the great God known as Savita (the Sun God) for whom they make offerings to the sacred fire. This exalted God (Savita; the Sun God) is omniscient and all-knowing (because he shows light and illumination to even the darkest corners of the world so that everything comes to light or becomes known), and is deemed to be most respectable and revered one in creation (as a fount of all the glorious virtues in creation symbolised by light and illumination, such as the virtues of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity, skills in any field requiring expertise, and spiritual enlightenment) (4).

5. Oh mind and intellect! I most humbly and respectfully bow before the supreme transcendental Brahm who is your Lord and the primary cause of everything that has come into being in this creation¹. Let this prayer of mine and my humility and submission to the Supreme Being bestow me with the same glory, fame, respect and honour that an expert in any field gets in this world. Let this prayer of mine be heard by all the virtuous and exalted Spirits residing in the divine heavens who have come into being from fractional parts of the cosmic Brahm who is eternal and a fount of the elixir that provides eternity and bliss². That is why all these holy Spirits and divine Gods are called ‘sons’ of the Supreme Being (because all of them have come into being from his own fractions, or they represent one or the other glories and divine aspects of this Supreme Being). Like any son, they all carry the ‘genes or footprints’ of their cosmic Father, and therefore are to be revered and paid tributes like one would do for Brahm (who is none but the Supreme Being or the cosmic Father referred here) (5).

[Note—¹By bowing before the supreme Lord the aspirant symbolically says that he has readied his mind and intellect to shed their basically arrogant and egoistic tendencies and prepare to receive divine benediction that only comes with humility and submission. These two virtues—humility and submission—are essential necessities for realising the Lord. They are called ‘Bhakti’ in the realm of devotion for the chosen deity. When one submits before one’s senior, the latter is morally bound to shower his compassion and benediction upon the person who has surrendered himself before him.

²The aspirant is trying to divert his mind and intellect as well as the other organs towards nobler goals in life, but in order to achieve success in his endeavour he has to ensure that the devil is kept at bay, for when one embarks upon some noble journey the devil is bound to create a ruckus. That is why the patron Gods referred to as the divine Spirits in the heaven are requested to listen to the prayer offered to the supreme Lord. These Gods must come to understand that they are now morally bound to give their protection to the aspirant because the latter has submitted himself to the Emperor of creation who also happens to be the Father of all these exalted Spirits and Gods, i.e. to the Supreme Being known as Brahm.]

6. Such a wise man who has received divine blessing has the following characteristic signs—he always finds happiness at places where fire sacrifices are being performed in a proper way such as by igniting the sacred fire by vigorous rubbing of the Arani and harnessing the power of the air or wind element to first light this fire and then keep it

burning, and where the sanctified liquid called Soma is used to create an auspicious ambience of extreme exhilaration and joy (6).

[Note—The metaphor of the fire sacrifice is used here to indicate Yoga or intense meditation and contemplation wherein a sincere aspirant meditates and practices various breath control exercises, such as doing Pranayam exercise etc., and employing other techniques such as Aasans and Mudras (postures of the body) and Bandhas (closure of all leakages) in order to harness the power of the wind element present inside his body to arouse the latent dynamic cosmic energy trapped inside in the various Chakra (whirling energy centers present inside the body) to obtain success in spiritual progress and finally obtaining the exhilarating feeling of bliss and happiness upon successful culmination of Yoga. The Soma is actually an intoxicating drink extracted from an herb of the same name, and its analogy is used here to indicate that the sense of extreme ecstasy obtained at the culmination of meditation is no less than the exhilaration obtained by drinking this Soma.]

7. Let us be inspired by Savita, the Sun God, and dedicate ourselves and pray devotedly and reverentially to the supreme transcendental Brahm who is the primary cause and the origin of the entire creation¹. Brahm is the Principal of creation.

Oh wise aspirant! You should seek and take the shelter of that Supreme Being who is the Principal Authority of creation. This would help to ensure that even your good deeds will not act like fetters to tie you down² (7).

[Note—¹Meditation and contemplation requires extensive and deep concentration. This generates tremendous amount of spiritual energy which helps to burn all traces of impurities that might be still clinging to the pure consciousness in spite of the aspirant already being wise and enlightened when he has studied the Upanishads and learnt about the ultimate Truth. The Sun is so luminous and its sunlight so powerful that if the rays are concentrated upon a spot, they create immense heat which can start a fire. This is proved when the Sun's rays are focused at a point upon a piece of paper or dry straw by a magnifying glass; the paper or the straw would very soon catch fire. Thus, this stupendous power and majestic potential of the Sun is symbolically invoked for the spiritual benefit of the aspirant when the latent fire of the Spirit, which is lying dormant, is ignited, and this in turn sets off a chain reaction which can lift the aspirant to a much higher level of spiritual existence just like a hot air balloon lifts a man to great heights.

²Good deeds are indeed like fetters as they create a sense of involvement in them, a sense of pride of doing good things, the false sense that the 'true self' is doing this or that whereas in actuality the 'true self' or the pure conscious Atma does not do anything at all for it is the body that does everything, whether good or bad, and the resultant desire to enjoy the auspicious affects of such good deeds—such as getting praise and respect. A true ascetic and hermit is one who has completely renounced all attachments with the world, and this notion of doing 'good deed' is an indirect way of getting back into the trap. It is like the so-called 'honey trap' whereby the creature is lured into the snare by some sweet bait. A truly self-realised man would remain neutral and indifferent towards deeds; he will have no notion of doing any deed at all. Therefore, a wise man who is enlightened about his 'true self' as being the pure consciousness rather than the gross body in which this consciousness lives, and the fact that this consciousness is the same as the universal cosmic Consciousness that prevails in the entire creation as Brahm, he would naturally rise above the mundane considerations of the world and do deeds in a dispassionate and neutral manner which is not selfish and driven by vested interests. This translates in practice that such a wise man is not tied by the deeds and their consequences because he understands that the deeds are being done by the gross body and not the

Atma. Such a wise and self-realised man would not yearn to enjoy the rewards of these deeds, nor would he suffer from any of their negative consequences. Therefore, no fetters related to the deeds can ever shackle him down.]

8. An expert aspirant should adopt a sitting posture that is conducive to obtaining enlightenment. It entails that he sits quietly in a steady posture with his chest, neck and head in a straight line¹. He should then make mental efforts to control the wayward tendencies of his sense organs to be extrovert, and instead divert the efforts of these organs inwards towards his inner self to facilitate self-realisation². To meditate upon the 'self' he should use the divine Mantra OM which would act like a boat to take him across this ocean represented by this horrifying world of artificiality³ (8).

[Note—¹Refer Kaivalyo-panishad, verse no. 5 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

²That is, he should withdraw the sense organs from the external world and control their natural tendency to roam about aimlessly in this world amongst their respective sense objects which gratify them and which is their nature habitat because these sense organs find rest in these objects and derive comfort and pleasure in their company. Instead, the wise spiritual aspirant should endeavour to divert their energy and constant enterprise towards 'self realisation' or realisation of the Truth hidden in one's own bosom. The posture described here is symbolic of 'self control and deep concentration' as these are prerequisites for such a spiritual exercise to be successful. Even as concentration and withdrawal from the extravaganza of the external world is practiced by all serious students, researchers, philosophers and scientists etc. even in ordinary life if they have to succeed in their goal, it is all the more expected from a spiritual aspirant because his enterprise is of the highest order and he needs to focus all his energy towards reaching his lofty spiritual goal in the short span of this limited life.

³In ancient times when modern ships had not been invented, the ships had large sails which carried the ship forward when they were filled with blowing wind, billowing with it and taking the ship along. This picture of a ship with billowing sails has been used here as a metaphor to envision how the ethereal word OM helps the Atma of the creature to cross the world of horrors. The ship is the creature, the Atma is the passenger, the sail is the process of meditation involving the body and the heart, and the billowing wind is represented by OM which fills this sail to take the ship across the heaving ocean represented by the world of miseries, pains and sorrow. Besides this, OM is the universal Mantra that is used during meditation to achieve success in spiritual attainment. Refer Canto 1, verse no. 14.]

9. A sincere aspirant who is an expert in the principles of meditation and spirituality should diligently follow all the tenets and ethos of behaviour and interactions with this world while devoting his time and energy in practicing Yoga with the aid of Pranayam (wherein the ascetic controls his breath and other vital winds in the body). This practice, when mature, helps him to control all his vital winds, and then when he has been able to successfully control them and they become weak and meek and submit themselves to the force of his will, he should gradually expel them (the vital winds called the various Prans in the body) through the nostrils.

Even as an expert charioteer controls the restless horses and takes the chariot to its designated destination, a wise, erudite and expert aspirant is always alert and vigilant so that he can keep his sense organs under tight leash and harness their energy to reach his destination. [This destination is self-realisation and Brahm-realisation. This eclectic stature paves the way for the final liberation and deliverance of the creature from the

snare of the tormenting gross body as well as the gross world in which this body lives. In other words, a self-realised person is able to cross this vast ocean-like world to reach his destination marked by emancipation and salvation.] (9).

10. [This verse describes the places that are conducive to meditation and contemplation.]

The aspirant should select a place that is conducive to the practice of meditation and contemplation in a comfortable way without causing any kind of disturbance, distraction and inconvenience to him.

For this purpose he should select place which is reasonably clean, calm, quiet and holy. The ground selected to sit upon should also be reasonably smooth, pleasant and comfortable to sit upon—such as a ground which is even, which has no pricking irritants and things that might cause unnecessary inconvenience such as pebbles, stones or other things that can prick and irritate, or sand because it is very dry and tends to get hot.

At the same time, the place should be reasonably pleasant and charming for the mind and the heart so that it contributes to the smooth conduct of spiritual practices without creating revulsion and a desire to move away from it. Besides this, the basic requirements of life should be easily available—such as water, shelter and peace.

It should be pleasing to the eyes as well (in the sense that it should be surrounded by natural greenery and so secluded that the aspirant does not have to see things or persons that cause any mental anguish or tension for him). Such places can be found in caves where even the wind does not disturb the aspirant when he is meditating and lost in deep contemplation (10).

11. When the aspirant practices Yoga (meditation) he experiences many visions in the beginning, such as that of fog, mist and smoke (i.e. appearance of cloud), of the sun (i.e. a brilliant disc of blinding light), of the wind or air (such as a strong breeze or storm blowing), of a glow from fire (resembling a glow-worm), of electric (such as a streak of lightening or scintillating spark from a welding machine), of a crystal, and of the moon (i.e. a large silvery white disc having emanating a soothing light). All these forms are indicators of Brahm (11).

[Note—Refer Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/2/1. When all these signs are visible, the ascetic should treat them as signs of appearance of the supreme Brahm in all these forms because Brahm has revealed itself in the forces of Nature that these visions represent. This is the grand and holistic view of Brahm that is expected from a self-realised practitioner of Yoga.]

12. When the ascetic has matured in his meditation, he experiences the presence in his body of the elementary elements of creation along with their inherent virtues and characteristic features, such as the earth (represented by smoke because the latter is dense and appears near the surface of the earth), water (represented by the fog or mist because they have water vapour and moisture), fire (represented by sun and the light of the glow-worm), air or wind (represented by storm and breeze), and sky (represented by moon against the background of the fathomless sky which makes the former more prominent), as well as the crystal which is colourless but shines with the light falling upon it (much like the moon shining with the light of the sun, or the moisture present invisibly in the atmosphere that shines and produces the colourful rainbow when sunlight passes through

them, or the crystals of snow and ice that provide the dazzling glitter to the snow-capped lofty mountains).

In this eclectic state of realisation, the aspirant ascetic becomes suffused with an astonishing infusion of spiritual energy which ensures that the gross external form of his body never has any diseases, nor does it decay or become old and crippled, and die prematurely¹ (12).

[Note--¹That is, in a higher state of Yoga, the aspirant's body does not remain an ordinary motley collection of elements in their gross form, but acquires the great divine characteristics that are latent in all these elements and which give each of these elements their intrinsic value and importance in creation. For example, the earth element that forms his external body abandons its grossness and stops stinking. Instead, it acquires the eclectic virtue of sustaining and harbouring life in all its colourful connotations. Say, how can anything that has the inherent virtue of harbouring life ever result in decay and degradation? In other words, the body of the ascetic would not get old and become decrepit; instead it would remain ever-fresh and emanate a fragrance.]

13. The first benefits of Yoga are the following—the body becomes lighter and sheds flab, it becomes disease-free, one loses all interest and attractions in sense objects of the world and their alluring charms, the body effuses a divine halo, the voice and speech become amiable, sweet and pleasant, an auspicious fragrance surrounds the aspirant (because the body has been de-toxicated and cleansed of all putrefying elements which are the cause of stink emanating from the body), and there is less degree of need to eliminate waste products from the body resulting in lesser output of urine and stool (13).

14. Just like a priceless gem shines brilliantly once the mud which had been encasing it is washed off, the living being with a gross body who has been able to witness and experience the essential element known as the pure conscious Atma present inside the body is also freed from all taints and pollutions represented by the numerous sorrows, miseries and pains associated with this gross body and obtained by its association with the world. He becomes pure and holy; he becomes unique in his beatitude and blessedness, and he feels himself fulfilled and contented (14).

15. When the wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant has reached that exalted state of meditation when he witnesses a bright flame resembling the light of a burning lamp while meditating, and has the level of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment to recognise this fount of divine light as his pure conscious Atma which is a personification of the supreme transcendental Cosmic Consciousness called 'Brahm', it is at that time or state that he has indeed realised his own Atma personifying Brahm; he has realised and witnessed and experienced Brahm first hand.

Upon becoming acquainted with the pure, divine and holy entity that is the Principal of creation, he becomes one who has no birth, is steady and eternal, and free from all taints and blemishes that stick to the creature when he loses his true identity. He becomes free from all fetters that had been shackling him¹ (15).

[Note—¹This is because the aspirant would have then realised that he is not an ordinary bundle of gross elements that constitute his body which is subjected to numerous problems and miseries associated with this world, but is rather an ethereal Spirit that transcends the limitations of the gross body and is eternal, imperishable, infinite, subtle and sublime. The gross body may have taints and blemishes, it may have shortcomings

and faults, but the ethereal body has none of them. The gross body may have its negativities, but the Spirit has none such demeaning attributes. The spiritual aspirant then realises that he—as the Atma—is such a divine being that he is none other than the glorious Brahm himself who has no birth, who is eternal and steady, and who is most immaculate as well as uncorrupt and incorruptible in creation. All the problems that the aspirant had been facing till this realisation dawned upon him was because he had lost track of his own true identity as the pure consciousness, and instead, under the influences of delusions and ignorance, he had been treating the gross body as his true self and the world as his real abode and fulfiller of his desires. That was the fundamental reason why he had been neck-deep involved in this world inspite of suffering so much and groaning all along under its weight and intense battering. But realisation of the Truth wakes him up to the actual reality about himself, and then all causes of miseries vanish.]

16. This Supreme Being (Brahm) is all-pervading and omnipresent; he is present in all the directions and every point in these directions. He was the one who was the first to reveal himself (as Hiranyagarbha or the subtle body of creation at the macro level; also known as Brahma the creator by Purans), he is the one who resides in the womb as the embryo, he is the one who is born in this world (as the Viraat Purush at the macro level, and the individual creature at the micro level), and he is the one who would be born in the future as well (when the new creation would be created at the end of the present cycle of birth and death). He is the one who is present in all the living beings uniformly and universally, and he is present in all the forms in which this world exists (16).

17. We bow most reverentially before that Supreme Being who is present in the fire, in the water, in all the worlds, in all plants and medicinal herbs, and everywhere else in creation. [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 17.] (17).

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(IV—G) Varaaha Upanishad (Canto 5)

The Varaaha Upanishad has been taught by Lord Varaaha, the Boar incarnation of Lord Vishnu who is the sustainer and protector of creation and the Supreme Being, to sage Ribhu. Hence, it is one of those Upanishads that were revealed by the Lord himself. It espouses and expounds upon the eclectic philosophy of 'Advaitya Vedanta', i.e. the doctrine of 'non-duality and uniformity' in creation which presents a unified and uniform vision of the world rather than a fractured view. It can be broadly classified into two components—the first half is dedicated to an elaborate discussion of this philosophy and how this changes the world view of the enlightened man (Canto 1-3) as preached directly by the Lord, while the second half is an exposition of the same philosophy by sage Ribhu for the benefit of another sage Nidagh on how this enlightened view can be actually realised and practiced by inculcating divine values in life (Canto 4) and by doing Yoga (Canto 5).

Canto 1 narrates that Lord Varaaha was pleased by severe Tapa (austerity and penance) done by sage Ribhu, and when the sage requested the Lord for Brahm Vidya

(the divine knowledge of the Truth personified as the supreme Brahm, knowledge that is liberating and delivering for the creature's soul) the Lord lists the long chain of ninety six Tattvas (fundamental principles of creation) and finally concludes that inspite of gaining access to the highest level of metaphysical and theological knowledge the best path of obtaining liberation and deliverance is Bhakti or devotion to God.

Canto 2 deals with the four preliminary disciplines called 'Saadhna Chatushtaya'—viz. the true nature of the Atma as the true 'self', pure consciousness and bliss, how the self-realised person becomes one with the Parmatma, the Supreme Being, how this lead to freedom from the fetters of Karma (deeds and actions), and how meditation leads to dissolution and overcoming of the mind etc. Brahm is the universal Absolute, the unequivocal Truth, and the only Reality in creation. It is the cosmic Spirit and Consciousness of creation that is present uniformly in each single unit of creation, from the single celled one right up to the most complex and colossal one, including the inner being of the spiritual seeker as his 'true self', as his Atma. It has no specific form, shape or colour; it is attributeless and invisible. But at the same time is has revealed itself in the form of the visible world complete with its stupendous variety and astounding diversity as a proof not only of its existence but also of its supernatural powers and qualities.

A wise and enlightened person who can see this Brahm inside his own self as well as in the rest of the creation, who has this grand and cosmic view of Brahm and is convinced of its truth obtains freedom from all ignorance arising out of a distorted and limited view of the supreme transcendental Brahm who is beyond definition and comprehension.

Canto 3 is an extension of Canto 2 and describes the Parmatma or the Supreme Soul as an embodiment of Sat-Chit-Anand (truth, consciousness and bliss). It is stressed here that the best and most effective way of attaining him is Bhakti or devotion.

Canto 4 is divided into two sections like the Vedas—the first section is the Mantras, and the second is the Brahman. There are in all 42 Mantras in section 1 which list the seven Bhumikas (stages of development of wisdom), while the second section consisting of 43 verses are like the Brahman which give a detailed description of all the stages. It, inter alia, describes the concept of Jivan Mukti, and cites the examples of sage Shuka and Vamdeo as epitomes of this type of Mukti. As for the various Bhumikas, another Upanishad deals with them also, viz. the Akchi Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda.

Finally, Canto 5 is exclusively dedicated to Yoga and its practice. It describes the various aspects and limbs of Yoga, such as Angas (limbs or branches), Bandhas (control of vital energy of the Pran), Chakras (subtle energy centers in the body), Naadis (nerves), OM and its use for Japa (repetition). This Canto winds up the Upanishad by outlining how the spiritual aspirant can obtain final liberation and deliverance by a judicious mix of the physical exercises of Yoga and the great tenets of metaphysics.

Since this book is dedicated to the theme of "Yoga", hence only Canto 5 is being narrated herein below, and the rest of the text is skipped.

Canto 5

[This Canto is dedicated to the practice of Yoga.]

1. After the above discussion, sage Nidagh requested sage Ribhu—‘Oh Lord! Please preach for me the full process of Yoga in detail’.

Ribhu accepted to do so. He began his discourse—‘This body is made up of five elements that form five sheaths or Mandals (which are also known as Koshas). Out of the five elements, the earth forms the grossest, the more firm, thick and harder parts of this body (such as the bones, muscles and skin). [There are five Koshas or sheaths that surround the Atma in the gross body—the food sheath called the Anna Maye Kosh, the wind sheath called the Pran Maye Kosh, the mental sheath called the Gyan Maye Kosh, the intellect sheath called the Vigyan Maye Kosh, and the bliss sheath enclosing the Atma called the Anand Maye Kosh.]

The water element forms the fluid parts (such as the blood, lymph and mucous etc.) present in the body (1).

2. The fire element is in the form of light, heat and energy; it gives energy, vitality, strength and stamina to the body. [The light inherent in the fire element enables the body to see things; the heat of the fire keeps the body warm; and its energy and vitality keeps the body energized, vigorous and active.]

The air element is always on the move, and therefore it not only enables the body to be active but also controls all its movements and functions. [The other name of the air or wind element is Pran, and the latter is synonymous with life and vitality. It is the Pran that keeps the body alive; it is the Pran that controls all its internal functions as well as the working of the external organs of perception and action.]

The sky element is omnipresent, all-encompassing and all-pervading; it fills the entire space between the organs, tissues and cells of the body. [Like the external sky which harbours the entire creation in its bosom and acts as an invisible buffer that protects the countless entities embedded in the sky from colliding with each other, all the internal organs, tissues and cells of the body are kept in their place by the cushioning effect of the subtle sky inside the body between them. Just like nothing exists that is not within the perimeter wall of the sky, no unit of the body exists that is not surrounded by this subtle sky element, or which is not embedded in it.]

A person who wishes to proceed on the path of Yoga must be well conversant with them (2).

3. A man breathes twenty one thousand six hundred times during the course of a day consisting of a day and a night (3).

4. When the air element (as vital winds called the various Prans) present in the gross body is weakened, the eyes become distorted (and this effects the vision of the person).

When the water element present inside the body is weakened, the hairs begin to grey (4).

5. When the fire element (called the 'Tej'—literally something that is radiant, splendorous, dazzling, glorious, powerful, potent, effective, quick and energetic) present inside the body is weakened, hunger is lessened.

When the air element present inside the body is weakened, the body's naturally fine and attractive looks such as the radiance and the glow of the skin as well as the alertness and agility of other external organs begin to fade away. The tautness of the muscles and robust structure of the body is affected when the water element gets feeble, and the texture of the body shows signs of dehydration and deflation. In such cases, there is a high probability of the body shaking involuntarily because the structural features become weak and lose their rigidity and tensile strength.

The only element left unaffected is the sky element, but it is not possible for the body to survive simply on this element. [The sky is without attributes, infinite and structure-less. If the body is supposed to be made up entirely of the sky element, then it would expand infinitely and lose all its recognizable features by which it is known.] (5).

6. In this way, when the gross physical body decays and is ultimately shed, the living entity present inside it, the conscious 'self', leaves it and flies off just like a huge bird abandoning a decayed and fallen tree and flying off far away from it in the infinite sky (6).

7. This is called the Uddiyan Bandha¹. [An entity that is bound or tied to something would fly off somewhere when it is freed like the bird leaving a cage. In the present case, the cage is the gross body and the freed bird is the conscious 'self' or the Atma of the creature which finds liberation when the body dies.]

Hence, a shackled creature (i.e. the conscious 'self') runs away at the time of death of the gross physical body just like a lion which has been able to free itself from the cage (7).

[Note—¹Refer verse no. 44 of Canto 5 below.]

8. Even as it is not possible to catch a lion once it has been freed, a creature who has found freedom from the body once cannot be shackled again.

When the fire element is activated in the bag-like abdomen, one feels great pain in the stomach. [This has reference to the pangs of hunger and the cramp-like feeling in the intestines if one has not eaten for a long time and has to do some activity on an empty stomach.] (8).

9. One should not practice Yoga when one is very hungry (i.e. on an empty stomach) as well as when the urinary bladders are full and require urgent evacuation. [One should not suppress hunger and urine to do Yoga. Since Yoga entails rigorous exercises and needs a lot of energy and stamina, the stomach must not be empty as it might cause abdominal cramps and other problems. Similarly, a full bladder is always harmful because Yoga is a prolonged exercise and retaining urine for long times is very harmful for the body. Besides this, the pressures created while doing various Aasans and Mudras, or sitting postures and positioning of the body while doing Yoga, would exert excessive pressure on the urinary organs, and the accumulated urine might spurt out involuntarily which is not a good thing to happen even under ordinary situations.]

A Yoga practitioner should eat light and nutritious meals spread over many sittings (instead of gorging like a hungry elephant at one go). This self-restriction is for his good (9).

10. The various aspects or types of Yoga practices, such as Mantra, Laya and Hath Yoga, should be done gradually, starting on a soft and easy note and progressing slowly to the medium level to finally reach the higher level of Yoga which is very rigorous and painstaking.

These three types of Yoga, viz. Mantra, Laya and Hath¹, are successful only when coordinated with the eight fold path of Yoga known as 'Ashtaang Yoga' (10).

[Note—¹(a) The *Mantra Yoga* refers to practicing Yoga through Mantra. It is that Yoga in which constant repetition of Mantras steadies the mind. The Mantra of the chosen deity is used as the standard common denominator and as medium to focus the mind and attention while practicing the eight-fold path of Yoga as prescribed by Patanjali, the greatest exponent of Yoga philosophy. This Yoga is called Astaanga Yoga, the Yoga with eight branches or organs.

According to Vaayaviya Sanhita, there are five kinds of Yoga, and Mantra Yoga is the first amongst them. As stated above, it is that Yoga in which constant repetition of Mantras steadies the mind. When this is associated with Pranayam or breath control, it is called 'Sparsha Yoga'. This develops into a higher state called 'Bhaava Yoga' when the repetition of Mantra stops automatically and involuntarily, leaving only the feeling of tender devotion and spiritual ecstasy in its wake inspite on one living in this world. When one rises higher in this practice, the world completely disappears and there is no feeling whatsoever, a sort of 'neutrality' or 'zero' effect is obtained. This is called 'Abhaava Yoga'. At the last stage of spiritual evolution, the union with Shiva, the ultimate Truth and the embodiment of Yoga, is obtained. This state or stage is called 'Maha Yoga'.

The use of various Mantras as tools to aid in meditation is called Mantra Yoga. Some of the eclectic Mantras used for this purpose are the following:--

(a) OM = This is the quintessential and evergreen spiritual which is regarded as the universal Mantra for the purpose of Yoga, meditation and contemplation. This has been described in detail in Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1.11-2, and Canto 5, verse nos. 69-72; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 9-17; Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 24; Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 2-5; Yog Tattva Upanishad, verse no. 19, 21-22, 63, 136-139; Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 14; Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 71, 86, 101-104.

(b) So-a-Ham = This Mantra has been described in a number of Upanishads—viz. (i) Sam Veda = Yogchudani Upanishad, verse no. 83. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 34, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-133; Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 28; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 17, Canto 4, verse nos. 1.11-2, Canto 5, verse nos. 69-72.

(c) Mantra for Khechari Mudra which is used for the purpose of meditating upon the sky element = Yoga Kundali Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 16-23, and Canto 3, verse no. 1.

(d) The Melan Mantra which establishes a union between the individual soul and the cosmic Soul = Yoga Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 1.

(e) The Hans Mantra = Hanso-panishad, verse no. 5-15, Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 59-63, and Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 31-35, 82-83, 93.

(b) *Laya Yoga*—Technically, the *Laya Yoga* has two meanings. One with a purely metaphysical dimension is the dissolution of the Chitta or the sub-conscious mind and its

various faculties so much so that the practitioner remembers the supreme Lord even while going about his daily life and its chores simply because his mind is completely dissolved in the remembrance of the Supreme Being and it is the physical gross body that does the various deeds associated with the world, resulting in the person remaining absolutely oblivious of what he has done or whatever is happening around him.

Persistent and consistent practice of Hath Yoga results in Laya Yoga, i.e. it helps in the merger of the individual soul of the creature, called the Jiva, with the supreme Soul of creation known as Brahm; it helps to bring about oneness between them. The Chitta (the sub-conscious mind and its power to think, remember and act as a referral bank of the intellect) dissolves in the Atma, and the vital winds in the body lose their inherent restlessness and become calm and quietened.

This has been asserted in verse no. 23 of Yogtattva Upanishad, and verse nos.135-137 of Canto 1 of Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

(c) The *Hath Yoga* is the Yoga that teaches how to bring about the union of Pran (the breath, the vital wind that resides in the upper part of the body) and the Apaana (the wind that moves down in the body and helps in digestion and excretion, the vital wind that lives in the lower part of the body) by means of strict following of the eight fold path of Yoga such as observance of Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna, concentration and visualization of the presence of the Supreme Being in the point of the forehead where the root of the nose meets the middle of the eyebrows, and Samadhi. It teaches the practical aspects of spiritual Yoga. It teaches the practical aspects of spiritual Yoga and includes various exercises—Bandhs, Aasans, Mudras and Pranyam.

Refer *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 133-134.]

11-11 ½. Now the spiritual practices that make up the eight-fold path of Yoga, called 'Ashtaanga Yoga', are being listed. They are Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam, Pratyahar [11], Dharna, Dyan and Samadhi [11 ½] (11-11 ½).

[Note—The 8 Paths of Yoga—See note of verse no. 39, Canto 4 of this Upanishad.]

12--12½. The Yam is of ten types. They are the following—Ahinsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-theft), Brahmacharya (self-restraint over the sense organs and observing celibacy and rigid discipline), Daya (mercy and compassion) [12], Kshamaa (forgiveness), Dhriti (to accept; to keep; to establish; to support; to be firm; to have courage and fortitude; to be steadfast in one's resolve; to be contented and satisfied; to be happy and cheerful under all circumstances), Mit Ahaar (eating in moderation and with restraint), Shauch (to remain pure and clean, both externally as well as internally), and Cheti (to remain alert and vigilant towards one responsibilities; to be conscientious; to be mindful of the voice of the conscience) [12½]. (12-12½).

13-14. The ten Niyams are the following—Tapa (austerity, penance, sufferance for some noble cause), Santosh (exemplary contentedness and satisfaction), Aastikta (to have faith, conviction and belief; to be a believer as opposed to being a heretic, an atheist and non-believer), Daan (charity, donation and alms; magnanimity and broad heartedness that comes with being compassionate, kind and merciful), Ishwar Pooja (worship of the Supreme Being) [13], Siddhanta Srawan (to hear the various principles, tenets or doctrines of the scriptures being taught and discussed by learned people), Lajja (to feel ashamed of doing anything ignoble, unrighteous and inauspicious), Mati (having a correct and fine tuned mind and intellect), Japa (repetition of holy Mantras and constant remembrance of divine principles learnt so that they are not forgotten), and Vrat (strict

adherence to vows and principles of auspiciousness, righteousness, nobility, propriety and probity as enunciated in the scriptures; fasting, abstinence and self-control also come under this category because they entail strict determination to observe vows) [14]. (13-14).

15-16. Oh great sage (Nidagh)! Now I shall tell you about the eleven different Aasans (sitting postures of Yoga) that have been lauded by those who are experts in Yoga. They are the following—Chakra¹, Padmasan, Kurma, Mayur, Kukut, Viraasan, Swastik, Bhadrasan, Singhasan, Muktaasan, and Gomukh Aasan² (15-16).

[Note—¹The *Chakra Aasan* is described in verse no. 17 below.

²The various other Aasans mentioned in this verse are being briefly described now.

(a) Padmasan—To sit cross-legged so that the upper part of the feet (i.e. the opposite side of the sole) along with the toes of one leg is placed on the thigh of the opposite leg (i.e. left toes on the right thigh, and right toes on the left thigh), is called *Padmasan* (literally to sit in a lotus posture). [The soles would be pointing outwards while resting on the thighs and the body would be held erect—i.e. the spine, neck and head would be in a straight line. The hands, with palms facing upwards and resting one on the top of the other, are placed on the folded legs in front of and below the navel. The chin is drawn in and held tightly near the base of the Adam's apple at the pit of the throat. This sitting posture is said to dispel/ameliorate all diseases and counter or antidote all poisons. That is, this sitting posture is very beneficial for the body] (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/30).

(b) Kurma Aasan—In *Kurmasan* (literally to sit like a tortoise), the two shoulders are virtually tied or clasped by the hands (whereas in *Kukutta Asan* the hands were thrust through closed or folded legs). [To do this Kurma Aasan, the legs are stretched out but slightly bent at the knee, the hand is passed under the leg of the respective side and then bent upwards from elbow joint to be taken towards the shoulder of the same side. The other hand is similarly brought out from under the leg of that side and taken to the corresponding shoulder of that side. The neck is bent forward towards the ground sufficiently enough to enable the two hands to grasp each other behind the nape of the neck. In this position, the back would be bent forward to be almost horizontal to the ground, the legs outstretched, chin almost touching the ground in front, and the hands clasped behind the neck. Seen from the front, this posture resembles a tortoise, and hence the name] (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/42).

(c) Mayur Aasan—A *Mayurasan* or *Mayur Asan* (literally, to sit like a peacock) entails putting the palms flat on the ground, pressing the elbows against the abdomen on either side of the navel, and then balancing the body in a horizontal plane with the hands and open palms resting flat on the ground to act as pedestals (47). In this posture, the head and the legs are turned upwards and away from the ground. This posture resembles the outline features of a peacock. [This 'Mayurasan' has the potential to destroy all sins.] (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/47-52).

(d) Kukut Aasan—A *Kukutta Asan* (literally, to sit like a cock) is when, after sitting in a normal Padmasan posture (as described in verse no. 39), both the hands are passed under the legs through the gap between the calf and the thigh of the respective side, the palms are spread out on the ground and the body is lifted up (levitated) on the straightened hands with the open palms and its fingers acting as pedestals on which the body appears to be mounted. (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/41).

(e) Virasan—To sit steady and erect with the legs bent inwards from the knee so that the lower part of the leg (i.e. the shin bone and calf) is tucked under the thigh of the same leg, and the buttocks rest on the upturned feet placed horizontally against the ground

under them, with the soles of the feet pointing backwards and outwards—this sitting posture is known as *Virasan*, or the way a warrior should sit.

[There is a variation of this posture in which both the legs are not folded in; only the right leg is closed in, while the left leg is bent at approximate 90^0 at the knee and its sole lies flat on the ground. The body is thus supported by one leg fully bent at the knee and one leg at 90^0 at the knee.] (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/37).

(f) Swastik Aasan—The sitting posture called *Swastik Aasan* is one in which a person sits cheerfully in an erect position, with the sole of one foot lying against the center of the thigh of the opposite leg. (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/35).

(g) Bhadrasan—A *Bhadrasan* or *Bhadra Aasan* (literally, to sit like a gentleman) is to sit in an erect posture by placing the two ankle joints under the buttocks on either side of the suture, i.e. the junction point of the testicles and the anus such that they (the two ankle joints) touch each other, and then using the hands to firmly clasp the soles of the feet of the respective side from the rear side of the buttock (i.e. left foot by the left hand and the right foot by the right hand). [This posture can neutralise the ill effects of all diseases which cause the production of toxins in the body or which are caused by administration of poisons or other toxins in the body; it helps to get rid of diseases as well.] (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/45).

(h) Singhaasan—A *Singhasan* or *Singh Aasan* (literally, to sit like a lion) is to sit in a posture so that the 'siwani', or the fold of skin between the anus and the genitals, called the suture, is pressed by the ankle bones of the opposite side, and the body is lowered on the legs which are bent or folded in from the knees, while the hands are stretched out and the open palms placed on the bent knee of the same side so that the fingers stretch out like a palm-fan with the open palm resting on the bent knee joint. [Usually in this posture, the mouth is wide open and the tongue protrudes out, while the eyes glare at some point in the distance or at the tip of the nose. This is how a lion sits. This posture makes the body resemble a sitting lion. This is a posture adored by ascetics (Yogis) and it is dedicated to the memory of Lord Narsingh, the half man and half lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu to liberate his great child devotee Prahalad from the torments inflicted upon him by his own demon father. Amongst the benefits of this Aasan is that it clears the voice and removes foul breath.] (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/44).

(i) Muktaasan—A *Muktasan* or *Mukta Aasan* (literally, the posture that gives liberation and deliverance) is when the ankle bones of one side of the body are placed under the buttock of the opposite side of the suture joint. The foot is either held at right angles to the ground with its sole pointing outward and the toe pointing inwards, such that the body is held erect on the toes of the legs which would now act as pedestals. There is a variation of this Aasan. In this, the foot is not held at right angles to the ground but upturned and placed flat on it under the buttocks so that the sole points upwards from behind the buttocks, and the body rests on the legs bent tightly inwards and tucked under the buttocks. In this sitting position, the heels would be pressing against the buttocks from below on either side of the suture. (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/46).

(j) Gomukh Aasan—To sit steady and erect so that the legs are bent inwards at the knees and the left ankle bones are placed to the right side of the spine while the right ankle bones are to the left side, is called *Gomukh Aasan* because this is how a cow sits. [The body is held erect. The left hand is taken to the back and it hooks itself to the right hand which has been brought to the back by lifting it and crossing it over the right shoulder. The fingers of both the hands are bent inwards towards the palms, and then they hook each other behind the middle of the spine.] (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/36).]

17. The simplest 'Chakra Aasan' (literally to adopt the posture resembling a wheel) is briefly being described here. The left thigh is placed on the right knee with the left leg bent inwards towards the right buttocks. Similarly, the right thigh is placed on the left knee and the leg bent inwards towards the left buttock. [This ensures that the part of the body below the pelvis assumes a circular shape with the legs bent at the knee and folded in unlike the usual shape of the body wherein the legs protrude out from the lower abdomen like two sticks.] Then the upper part of the body is held perpendicular to this wheel-like shape assumed by the legs. [The entire shape would resemble a wheel with an axle.] (17).

18. [Now the process of Pranayam or breath control exercise is described in brief.]

The practitioner should first do Purak (inhalation of breath and filling the abdomen with it), followed by Kumbhak (withholding of the breath) and finally Rechak (exhalation of breath slowly). This three-step cycle should be repeated often.

The vital winds called Pran (which symbolise the vital life-infusing and life-sustaining forces in the body which are synonymous with life and without which the body would not survive even for a moment) move through the body and are distributed in it by means of channels called the Naadis (tubular ducts in the body; the nerves and veins) (18).

19-20. The body of all living beings (humans) measure approximately ninety six finger-widths in length. The central point of the body is said to be the point which is two finger-widths above the anus and the testicles. [That is, it is the apex of an equilateral triangle with the anus and the testicles marking its two lower points, and the symbolic central point of the body representing its apex point.]

At a distance of approximately half a finger length above the genital is the cluster of Naadis called the 'Kanda'. [The word literally means a tuberous root. This is a clutch of Naadis in the pelvis region below the navel and above the genitals.] (19-20).

21. This Kanda has a dimension measuring four finger-widths in height and a similar diameter. It has a rounded shape like that of an egg. [Hence, it is like a cylinder that is wide at its upper end and tapers at the lower end, almost resembling a dwarfish carrot or radish; or it is like an onion or garlic or turnip.]

It is surrounded by flesh, rectum, bones (of the pelvis region) and blood (21).

22. The Naadi Chakra (the wheel-like structure where all the Naadis have their central origin) is located in this region. This Chakra is like a circular saw with an edge that has twelve serrations. This Naadi Chakra is said to be the center which bears the body, which supports the body. [The reason is that if the nerves fail, the entire body's normal functioning fails. Such a body is a burden on its own self though it may be technically alive.]

The Kundalini (the coiled subtle energy center of the body) is also located here (22).

23. [The various important Naadis are being narrated now. These Naadis have been described in other Upanishads also, e.g. Yoshikha Upanishad, Jabal Darshan and Yogchudamani.]

The Sushumna Naadi covers the opening of the Brahm Randhra. (This is a slit-like opening from where the subtle energy of the body enters the spinal cord and moves upwards.) The other two Naadis that accompany Sushumna Naadis are called Alambusa and Kuhu (23).

24. Beyond (after) this Anant (Sushumna) Naadi are present the pair of Naadis called Varuna and Yashaswani. To the right of this Anant (Sushumna) Naadi is present the Pingla Naadi (24).

25. Beyond (after) it (Pingla) are present the two Naadis called Pusha and Payaswani. Behind the Sushumna is located the Saraswati Naadi (25).

26. Beyond (after) it (Saraswati) are located the two Naadis called Shankhini and Gandhari. To the left of the Sushumna Naadi is located the Ida Naadi (26).

27. Beyond (after) it (Ida) are located the Hastijivaha and Vishwodari Naadis. These Naadis are present in a circle like the spokes of a wheel (27).

28. These twelve Naadis bear the twelve vital winds¹. [That is, the twelve vital life-sustaining airs of the body move through these channels of the body to support the entire body and give it its conscious sensation of life and vitality.]

These Naadis are of different colours² just like tubes that are wrapped by coverings of varying colours to distinguish them one from the other. [The colours are probably due to the presence of one dominant wind flowing thorough a particular Naadi. These Naadis are not hollow tubes but are filled with body fluids which help carry impulses from one corner of the body to another. These fluids have varying density, viscosity and colour. Since the Naadis are transparent in nature, the colour of fluid content is seen through their walls, lending them their characteristic colours. It is like having a complex electric gadget with wires of different colours and thickness to distinguish one from the other and mark their separate functions so that there is no confusion between any two of them.] (28).

[Note—¹The vital winds are the following—According to Subalo-panishad, Canto 9, verse no. 1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are fourteen vital winds present in the body. It lists their functions as follows—(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaana—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaan—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Samaana—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambh—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antarayam—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc.

(verse 13); (14) Naag—this controls the ‘Chitta’ or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

According to other Upanishads such as Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are ten Prans, viz. Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana, Vyan, Nag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay. So, it is hard to say which two Prans has this present Upanishad of ours has avoided in the absence of any specific names. Perhaps the remaining two winds flow thorough the two Naadis mentioned below in verse no. 29.

²Colour of the vital winds—The Dhyānbindu Upanishad, verse nos. 95-99 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition not only describes the ‘colours’ of the five principle winds but also their ‘Beej Mantras’.]

29. In the area of the navel, there is whirling subtle energy center called the ‘Nabhi Chakra’. [Nabhi = navel; Chakra = wheel.] The two glorious Naadis called the Naad-dhara and the Jwalanti are located here. [Refer verse no. 22 of Canto 5.]

The Naad-dhara¹ is kept active because of the cosmic vibration called Naad resonating through it. The Jwalanti², as the name suggests, is radiant and splendid with the cosmic energy flowing through it. [It is believed that this Nabhi Chakra is a symbolic center of the cosmic Sun in the body, and its energy flows through this Naadi.] (29).

[Note—¹The Naad is the cosmic sound that is created by the background vibrations in the cosmic ether that generate energy which powers the dynamo of creation. The word Dhara means a continuous stream, an unbroken flow like that created when oil flows on a smooth surface. Hence, the composite phrase ‘Naad Dhara’ would mean the Naadi in which vital life forces continue to ceaselessly pulsate throughout the life of an individual. This vibration caused by this pulsation is like the somber humming sound heard when one stands under high-tension overhead electric cables. This vibration keeps the generator of the body running; it provides the subtle spark of life to it and the energy that would keep the body up and going. By corollary, if this Naad Dhara stops, life comes to an end inside the body of the creature. This Naad Dhara can be practically heard by anyone by sitting in a quiet place and closing the ears with the finger or thumb. A distant roar is heard, and it reminds one of the roar of the distant ocean, or the humming of the overhead wire cited above.

²The word ‘Jwalanti’ literally means one that is live, hot and burning, one that is lighted, radiant and energetic. It reminds one of the sun which is a live example of something that fits the bill of being a Jwalanti. So we observe here that the kinetic energy of the Naad Dhara has transformed into the heat, light and energy represented by warmth, stamina, strength and vitality symbolised by the Jwalanti.

Thus, while the Naadi which carries the Naad Dhara is central to the existence of life inside the body and keeps its dynamo running, the actual energy generated by it is carried to other parts of the body by the Naadi called Jwalanti much like the cables that carry the electric generated by the power station to the electric grid and keep our homes lighted.]

30. The other two glorious Naadis present here are Para-randhra and Sushumna. All these four Naadis (Naad-dhara, Jwalanti, Para-randhra and Sushumna) are radiant and glorious like gems. All of them are blocked at their lower end by the mouth of the Kundalini (30).

[Note—Following the two primary Naadis described in verse no. 29, two more important Naadis emerges from this point of the body—one that goes to the top of the head till it reaches the Brahm Randhra, the hair-like slit on the cranium, and the other that goes down. The first Naadi is called the ‘Para Randhra’ and the other is called ‘Sushumna’.

These Naadis are called 'gems' in a metaphoric sense to indicate their indispensability and importance in the hierarchy or network of Naadis—they are the most precious amongst all the Naadis present in the body. This is because notwithstanding their importance vis-à-vis Yoga and spiritual practices, they represent the central nervous system, and without them the body would be as good as dead.]

31. In this way, those who are wise and erudite understand about the importance and significance of the Naadis and the vital winds or airs flowing thorough them. They bear the more important ten vital winds or airs¹ in them (31).

[Note—¹The ten more important vital winds or airs in the body are mentioned in other Upanishads such as Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. These are the following—Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana, Vyan, Nag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay.]

32. For meditation, the spiritual practitioner should sit calmly without moving in an erect position with the spine, neck and head in a straight line. He should concentrate upon the Turiya state of existence, which is the Absolute state when nothing else except the supreme consciousness prevails everywhere. This meditation is done by concentrating the external vision on the tip of the nose and the internal vision at a point in the core of the heart where the conscious Atma is said to have its subtle presence (32).

33. One should visualize that drops of Amrit (the eternal elixir of spiritual bliss and ecstasy) is dripping on this point in the heart as well as the tip of the nose.

Simultaneously the anus is closed by restricting the rectal muscles and the Apaana wind is pulled upwards. [Normally this wind has a tendency of escaping down through the anus, so when the anus is closed it is natural that this wind would try to move upwards when the pressure in the lower intestines build up. This is the Bandha Mudra.] (33).

34. This Apaana wind is pulled up silently with the help of Pranav or OM. [This refers to concentration of the mind and gathering all the strength of the body while holding breath and humming the ethereal Mantra OM which helps in controlling the breath and providing sufficient energy and concentration to the practitioner that enables him to actually pull up the Apaana wind by diverting all the stamina and energy present in the body to achieve success in this difficult task. It is a difficult proposition because the Apaana wind has a natural tendency of moving down and not up, so to pull it upwards against the forces of gravity and laws of nature is not an easy thing to accomplish.]

The vital energy, vigour, strength and stamina of the body are compositely represented by the 'Sri Beej' which is the symbolic Mantra for Shakti or the dynamic energy and vitality present in the body. [This 'Sri Beej Mantra' is like the various symbols used in science or mathematics to denote certain entities for the purpose of representation.]

These two, the OM and the Sri Beej, are both employed for the purpose of lifting the Apaana wind. [While the Mantra OM helps in controlling the breath and concentrating the mind on Yoga, the Sri Beej Mantra provides the required dynamism, energy, strength and stamina to sustain the painstaking efforts of Yoga and help the practitioner to reach the end successfully. While the Mantra OM helps to create an upward pull during the

three phases of Rechak, Purak and Khumbak done during Yoga, the Sri Beej stokes the fire in the lower half of the body, thereby heating it and infusing it with energy that helps to push the Apan wind upwards. The combined affect of pulling and pushing done by the OM and the Sri Beej result in the Apan wind becoming upwardly mobile.]

Then he should concentrate his attention on the spot where the Amrit (the elixir of bliss and ecstasy) and the Sri Beej (the source of the dynamic energy) are located (34).

35. When he has tasted the nectar of Amrit (i.e. when a person has experienced the bliss and ecstasy attending self-realisation) he becomes so engrossed in it that he is not aware how time flies. Anything upon which a man puts his mind and heart is easily obtainable. [This is because he would be very sincere in making an all out effort to achieve his dream object for which his heart longs and which his mind has told him is very beneficial for him. The chances of getting success in any enterprise rise dramatically if one is mentally and emotionally involved in it.] (35).

36. Just as it is impossible for fire to live in water, it is also impossible to be certain about anything in this world. Nothing said about this world can be said with firm conviction and faith that it is a reality and truth; nothing in this world is definitive, certain and convincing (36).

37. When the vital airs in the body are restricted and focused on the oven-like core of the body present in its center (i.e. the Nabhi Chakra and the Kanda area—refer verse nos. 19-22 of Canto 5), they help to stoke the latent fire element representing the inherent dynamic energy, vigour, stamina, strength and vitality present in the body which has become dormant and weak over time.

This fire would heat up the body and dry up the excess of water element inside it, and the result is that the body becomes strong, robust, sturdy and one with a high tensile strength (as if it was made of steel)¹ (37).

[Note--¹This can be understood if we take the example of a tree. A green log of wood does not have the same strength as dry wood; no one makes furniture of green wood. Green, tender branches of trees can easily be bent, scrapped, cut and felled, but dry and seasoned hard wood requires a lot of effort and labour to even make an incision on its hardened bark. An ordinary kitchen knife is able to cut open tender vegetables, but hard wood makes a man sweat while using a saw or an axe to cut it. Even chopping of dry trees is harder as compared to a green tree. River bridges and beams of houses are made of completely seasoned and dried wood simply because of its durability and strength. Similarly, a body which is lean but muscular is surely much stronger as compared to one which is flabby and puffed up due to accumulation of water in the tissues. Accumulation of excess of fluids in the body creates medical problems such as oedema, pleurisy, dropsy, diarrhea etc.]

38. When the anus and genital openings are closed by constricting them, the Apan wind is made to rise up and mix with the Samaan wind (38).

39. The practitioner should focus his attention on the Atma (pure conscious 'self') and its stupendous glories and potentials. He should simultaneously meditate upon or focus his attention on the nectar-like Amrit that drips and spreads out from it, overwhelming him

and filling him with extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy. [That is, he should meditate upon the Atma which is a fount of elixir that provides spiritual bliss and happiness upon its realisation. This sensation of bliss and its attendant ecstasy is very uplifting for the person experiencing it; it overflows all over him, drenching him and soaking him from all sides. It gives him a feeling of expansion; he no longer feels restricted to and by his gross physical body but expands to cover all available subtle space. This sensation is aided when, as he progresses in his spiritual practice, he hears the cosmic sound called Naad reverberating through his entire being. He then feels very light and all-pervading as if he has dissolved himself in the sky element to hear the sound of Naad in a stereophonic way.]

He should commence his Yoga practice with diligence and vigour from this central doorway. [That is, he should start Yoga exercises by first practicing the closing of the anus and genitals to control the vital winds from escaping, or from pushing stool, urine or sperms out of the body due to the build-up of internal pressure that is usual during advanced stages of Yoga.] (39).

40. The Pran wind and Apan winds are allowed to mix, and then the practitioner should visualize that his vital winds are moving upwards. This is considered the best form of Yoga and shows the light of success in the path of Yoga (40).

[Note—The Pran wind flows in the upper part of the body and it is usually defined as breath, while the Apan wind dwells in the lower part of the body and is known as flatus.]

41. Even as a broken bridge interferes with the smooth flow of water of a river, a wise and erudite spiritual seeker should treat the gross body as an impediment in his spiritual success. [The body would create numerous hurdles, such as for example the body would resist hardships, it would squirm at the thought of sufferance, penance or austerity, it would rather pamper itself than sacrifice something so that others can benefit from it, it would prefer gratification of its sense organs over renunciation and detachment, it would need food to eat and drink to quench its thirst and find hard to desist from them, it would prefer rest and comfort instead of painstaking labour, it would want a reward for any effort made by it and would balk at even the thought of doing anything for free as a means of social service or what is called ‘selfless service’. Refer also to verse no. 9 of Canto 1.] (41).

42. Similarly, the various Naadis are likened to snares that tie a creature down. [This metaphor is very apt because the Naadis—the nerves and veins—are indeed like ropes or strings with which one is tied to a pole. The pole here would be the physical gross body because these Naadis are responsible for sustaining and protecting the body. The nerves keep the body alive with sensation of life, and the veins circulate blood and nutrition throughout the body. Besides this, the vital winds that sustain the body and responsible for all its activities also move along these Naadis—refer verse no. 28. So the Naadi is like a fetter that ties down the Pran of the creature or the vital life forces representing his Atma to this gross body.]

When the creature remains tied by these Naadis to the gross body, he would have to appease the various Gods who preside over the different organs of the body and keep

them in good humour (so that they do not become malignant and unnecessarily torment the creature by creating various diseases etc.) (42).

43. Suppose four paths converge at a point. A wise man would first decide which path is the best one that would take him to his desired destination and give him the desired result, and then he would close the rest of the paths or forget about them to avoid confusion (43).

44. When the anus and genitals are closed, and the flow of the vital winds in the Naadis is controlled, the Udaan wind in association with the Pran wind pulls up all other winds in the upper direction. This is Uddiyan Bandha. [Refer verse nos. 6-7 of this Canto 5.] (44).

45. Since the closure of the anus and the genitals or urinary organs help to close all outlets of the body through which the Pran or the other vital winds could escape when pressure is exerted on them while doing Pranayam, it is called 'Samput Bandha' or comprehensive closing of the subtle apertures of the body. This is also called 'Mool Bandha' because the Mool Kand is located in this area, and also because it is the area that acts as the foundation that supports the rest of the body. [It is a most vital and sensitive area of the body. One can imagine what would happen to the body if the stool and urine are suppressed or the fate of creation if the genital organs become impotent.]

This is the way how the three classical Bandhas of Yoga are achieved. [Refer also to verse no. 68 of Canto 5.] (45).

46. One should practice Yoga of controlling the vital winds continuously day and night just like the wheel of day and night turns continuously without pause or break (46).

47. Constant practice ensures that the process of controlling the vital winds becomes an easy and normal affair as if it was a routine matter of daily life. The benefits are obvious—the latent fire energy, heat, stamina and vitality of the body gradually begin to increase, and this result in a better cooking in the intestines of the food eaten by the creature, which in turn improves digestion so that whatever is eaten becomes more beneficial for the body (47).

48. When the food eaten is properly digested, the body is supplied with more vital nutrients and this improves the basic health and vitality of the body. This manifests in the form of an overall improvement of health and increased stamina, energy, strength, resilience, vitality and vigour of the body (48).

49. When the body's inherent elements get a boost, when the basic nutritional requirements of the body are properly taken care of, the brain functions at the peak of its capacity. This helps a man to gradually acquire more knowledge and skills (both pertaining to the gross world and to the spiritual world).

With acquisition of true knowledge and wisdom, his sins and their consequences begin to ebb and die out in a phased manner¹ (49).

[Note—¹A well-nourished body harbours a healthy and alert brain which is needed to study, understand and analyse intelligently what is being studied, and remember what has been studied for application in practice. A malnourished body would not be able to

sustain mental labour, and fatigue would soon set in. With increase in the level of alertness of the mind and its accompanying virtues of wisdom, erudition and knowledge, with the ability to concentrate his attention and study the scriptures, understand their profound tenets and interpret them in an intelligent and correct manner would a man become aware of what is deemed to be auspicious and righteous, and what is not. It is only then that a wise man can make a choice between the good and the bad. Once he decides the auspicious path, he would diligently follow it, getting rid of his baggage of sins. A healthy body harbours a healthy mind, and they are pre-requisites for a man being able to overcome sins or follow the auspicious and righteous path shown by the scriptures. For instance, a hungry man would not have any second thought on stealing food, and a man in dire needs for the basic essentials of life would not have any compunction about acquiring them by any odd means available to him, even though he might be aware of the improper way he has to acquire them, in order to survive in this harsh and uncompromising world. But if the stomach is full and a man's basic needs are met, there would be no reason or need for him to commit sins and do anything that is not right.]

50. The Mooladhar Chakra is triangular in shape and is located between the anus and the genital organ. The supreme Shiva in the subtle form of a 'Bindu' (drop or point source of cosmic dynamic energy represented by the sperm and the vital energy restricted in the Kundalini) is located here. It is from here that he shines and illuminates the surroundings. [Refer verse no. 53 of Canto 5 also.] (50).

51. It is here that the coiled dynamic energy center of the body called the Kundalini is located. It is here that the vital winds accumulate (upon putting pressure on the Mool Kand) and the subtle fire energy of the body is ignited or enhanced (51).

[Note—Refer also to Yogshikha Upanishad, 1/168, 2/6 and 6/3 in this context.]

52. It is from here or due to the activation of the Kundalini's subtle energy that the Bindu¹ develops and the cosmic Naad² is enhanced.

The practitioner also hears the subtle sound of breath coming in and going out of the nostrils, the sound that resembles the nasal sounds made by silently hissing the two letters 'Ha' and 'Sa' of the Sanskrit alphabet. The combined effect of continuously hearing these two sounds in a cyclic manner as the practitioner exhales and inhales breath is the formation of the word 'Hans' which means 'a divine Swan'. [In other words, by continuously practicing Yoga, a stage is reached when the spiritual aspirant realises that he has obtained an exalted spiritual stature and has been successful in his endeavour of doing Yoga. This achievement is indicated by the fact that his sub-conscious mind hums and constantly reminds him that he is as pure and holy as the Swan—the 'Hans'. This word is also used as a Mantra. Refer Hanso-panishad, verse no. 5-15, Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 59-63, and Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 31-35, 82-83, 93.]³

From this arises the Mana (i.e. the desire and inclination of the mind to enjoy the bliss and ecstasy that comes with experiencing the pure conscious 'self' or Atma, in all its glory and magnificence, during meditation) (52).

[Note—¹The word *Bindu* literally means a drop of some liquid, for instance a drop of nectar. At an advanced stage of Yoga when the practitioner is able to activate the Kundalini, control his vital winds and successfully implement other aids of Yoga such as

correctly and persistently doing various Aasans, Mudras and Bandhas for a prolonged period, he would automatically experience rewards inherent to the practice of Yoga. Therefore, he would experience extreme bliss and ecstasy that would appear to drip upon his inner self and overwhelm him. His mind and heart would be submerged in enjoying this nectar that would drip drop by drop like honey effusing from a ripe and full honeycomb. This concept of Bindu in association with Naad has been used to name a special Upanishad called the 'Naad Bindu' Upanishad. Other Upanishads also deal with this subject, e.g. Dhyana Bindu, Amrit Bindu and Amrit Naad Upanishads etc.

²At the same time as experiencing this dripping of nectar of extreme bliss and ecstasy, the Yoga practitioner would also hear the Naad which is a subtle roar of the vibration present in the cosmic ether that is now reverberating in his entire inner being. This happens because the body has the subtle sky element present inside it as much as the presence of this element outside of it. This Naad resembles a roar of the ocean, or the rumbling of clouds, or a train trundling away in a distance. In fact, Naad more closely resembles the roar of a fiercely burning fire—which is symbolic of the fact that the subtle fire element which was hitherto dormant and only smoldering inside the body of the practitioner has now been kindled and activated by the practice of Yoga and its attendant activation of the Kundalini by stoking it with the powerful vital winds such as Pran, Apan, Samaan, Vyan and Udaan. Thus, the cosmic dynamic energy that is inherently present in the body of all living beings, but unfortunately had become dormant and inactive, is now re-ignited into its finest form. The Naad is therefore the sound of the raging fire element present inside the body. So when a practitioner of Yoga hears the Naad he feels certain that his Kundalini as well as the latent energy of his body has been activated and the internal fire is burning vigorously. Refer Naad Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 33-36, Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/2/2, and Hansa Upanishad, verse no. 16.

³Traditionally, Swan is regarded as a holy and pure bird. It is said to pick up pearls from amongst an array of gems and jewels, and drink milk while leaving aside water and other additives that have been added to adulterate the milk. Its high position in the hierarchy of evolution, especially that aspect which relates to wisdom, erudition and skills, is proved by the fact that it is the mount of Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom, erudition, skills and knowledge. So, when a practitioner of Yoga has reached the stage when he begins to hear Naad and his breath humming silently the word 'Hans' as it comes in and goes out of the body during normal course of routing breathing as well as during the actual time when Yoga is being done, i.e. during the Rechak and Purak phases of Pranayam respectively, he would understand that he is successful in his endeavour.]

53. There are said to be six subtle energy centers in the body called the 'Chakra', such as the Mooladhar Chakra¹. [They are called Chakra because they resemble a swirling wheel of energy, much like the whirl-wind. Refer also to verse no. 50 of this Canto 5.]

The area between the throat and the cranium is called the 'Shambhav' or the abode of Lord Shiva. [That is, it is this area of the body where auspicious wisdom, knowledge and enlightenment along with intellectual skills and erudition have their seat, all of which are symbolic of Shiva, the Supreme Brahm personified.]² (53).

[Note—¹The word *Chakra* refers to the subtle energy centers present inside the body. According to Yoga texts, when the vital energy trapped in these Chakras are activated, a person acquires immense potentials, including spiritual and mystical powers. They have been elaborately described in Upanishads dealing with Yoga and mystical forms of ritualistic worship involving meditative practices in order to enable the practitioner acquire astounding mystical and supernatural powers.

The main six Chakras are the six main subtle energy centers of the body which act as power houses which supply energy for the various functions of the body. They are the following—(1) The ‘Mooladhar Chakra’ is located between genitals and anus in the area called the perineum. It is the site of the symbolic Shiva Lingam (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 168) and the route through which the Apaana wind finds its entrance in the Kundalini (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 13). It is also here that the ascetic hears the Naad. It is said to be a symbol of Shakti or the dynamic powers of Shiva principle (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 8, 11-12 and Canto 3, verse no. 2). (2) The ‘Swadhisthan Chakra’ is located in the region of the groins of males and the Bhug area of females. It has a 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed and its counterpart in the female is the clitoris. (3) The ‘Manipur Chakra’ is located in the navel area, is shaped like a gem and is surrounded by the network of Naadis (nerves) called solar plexus. It is also the site of the Sun energy. (4) The ‘Anahat Chakra’ is located in the chest between the heart and lung area and it is shaped like a swan looking downwards. It is also assumed to be like an 8-petal lotus facing down. It is also called the Hridaya Chakra because of its close proximity to the heart and close association with it as the Atma or pure consciousness resides in the subtle space of the heart. (5) The ‘Vishuddha Chakra/Kanth Chakra’ is located in the pit of the throat. To the left of it passes the Eda nerve representing the moon, to its right goes the Pingla nerve representing the sun, and in the center is the Sushumna nerve through which the Kundalini energy rises up from the base of the spine to the skull. (6) The ‘Agya Chakra or Bhru Chakra’ is located between the eyebrows and root of the nose. It is also called the third eye of enlightenment and wisdom. It represents the ‘Mahat’ (that which transcends the elements) and its Beej (i.e. its root syllable) is the Sanskrit monosyllabic word OM.

²Earlier, verse no. 50 of Canto 5 has stated that Shiva is established in the Mooladhar Chakra where the genitals are located. This form of Shiva represents the cosmic Shakti principle or the dynamic powers of the Supreme Being that is responsible for creating this world. That is why sexual method is the mainstay for propagation of creation, and the organs that help in this divine mandate are called the abode of Shiva. The present verse refers to that aspect of Brahm, the Supreme Being, which is related to the divine virtues of purity of thought and wisdom, the possession of the eclectic virtues of erudition, sagacity, knowledge and enlightenment. A man is honoured and remembered not for his sexual activity but for the level of wisdom, erudition, wisdom, intelligence and knowledge that he has, for even animals can reproduce and indulge in the sex act. Such a man would have natural and in-built scrupulous that would prevent him from doing anything that is not auspicious and righteous. This would set him apart from those who are pervert and sinful. The virtues mentioned above are the functions of the mind and not the gross body, so a man who has a well-developed mind and intellect as his advisor is deemed to be a wise man as compared to one who is driven by the impulses of the gross sense organs of his gross body. Hence, the area of the body where these auspicious and holy virtues have their origin and abode, i.e. the head, is said to be the abode of Shiva—the auspicious, the divine, the holy and truthful One.]

54. The Naadis have their base or foundation in the Kanda or Pinda (literally a ‘ball or egg like structure). [Refer verse nos. 20-22.]

These Naadis are the base for the various Prans or vital winds that sustain and protect the body. [This is because if these Naadis do not carry consciousness or life-impulses to all corners of the body, the latter would die. The Pran is a word used to indicate ‘life’ and not death. Therefore, as long as a creature is alive, it is deemed that the Naadis have Pran flowing and pulsating in them. Refer also to verse no. 28 and 31.]

These Prans are the basis of life in all Jivas or living beings. [Pran is a synonym for the wind or air element that helps sustain life on earth. No living being would survive if there was no air on earth.]

And the Jiva is the abode for the Hans, i.e. the pure consciousness known as the immaculate and wise Atma that resides in the body of the living being called the Jiva. [The Atma is the true self of the creature, and the body is merely its habitat.] (54).

55. This Hans (the Atma; the pure consciousness) is the divine and sublime entity which provides the 'Shakti', the dynamic force, the basic energy, the vitality, the strength and the vigour that sustains and protects the entire edifice of this creation consisting of both the animate and the inanimate world. [Here the animate world refers to the creatures that have mobility, i.e. members of the entire zoological kingdom, and inanimate world is the immobile forms of life such as trees and other members of the plant kingdom.]

An ascetic should have no doubts and be free from all confusions and consternations in this regard. [This way he would be able to concentrate upon meditation and contemplation.] He should be cheerful, and practice Pranayam (breath control exercises) carefully and diligently (55).

56. An ascetic is regarded as expert, wise and erudite if he is able to focus his mind and concentrate his attention on researching the essential principle of creation, the supreme Absolute, inspite of being physically tied by the three types of fetters. [The gross body of the ascetic in which his 'self' lives is the *first fetter*; the external world and its numerous demands is the *second fetter*; and the baggage of past deeds and their consequences is the *third fetter*. An ascetic who remains internally detached from all these, who is unconcerned by the constant nagging and irritations created by these three fetters, who just neglects them and instead concentrates the energy and abilities of his mind and intellect to find out the ultimate spiritual goal of life and find ways to reach it, who aims his gun at the target without being disturbed by extraneous factors and does not allow these three factors to divert him from his objective, who enjoys the bliss of self-realisation inspite of living in a gross body and an equally gross world with the burden of past deeds and their consequences weighing down heavily on his shoulders—only such an ascetic is regarded as the correct candidate for Mukti—spiritual liberation and deliverance, spiritual emancipation and salvation.] (56).

57. He should symbolically catch hold of the three factors (as mentioned in verse no. 56) that are acting as fetters for his soul and churning it endlessly for many generations by doing the Purak phase of Pranayam. Then they should be held captive during the Kumbhak phase, and finally eliminated by the Rechak phase. [The Purak phase involves inhaling breath—a metaphoric way of saying that he brings the fetters closer to him and catches hold of them. The Kumbhak phase is holding the breath inside the body—a symbolic way of saying that the three factors are held under strict control as one keeps a prisoner in control. Then the Rechak phase entails exhalation which symbolises the exiling of these enemies of the soul.]

He should fix his attention on the target which is paramount for him. That is, he should fix his mind on the realisation of the supreme Brahm and on obtaining permanent freedom for his 'self' (57).

58. [Now a metaphysical meaning is given to the three phases of Pranayam.]

All the external sense objects of this material world are equivalent to the Rechak (exhalation; elimination) phase of Pranayam—i.e. they are better shunned and done away with; they ought to be eliminated as waste product that would poison the ‘self’ if retained.

Acceptance of knowledge and wisdom contained in the scriptures is equivalent to the Purak (inhalation) phase of Pranayam—because they are like whiff of fresh breath which injects life in the form of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment in the otherwise gross life of a creature bound by ignorance and delusions. This knowledge and wisdom lights up the inner self of the creature and rejuvenates the spirit.

The Khumbhak (holding of breath inside the body between the Purak and Rechak) is equivalent to meditating and contemplating upon the pure consciousness residing inside one’s own bosom as one’s Atma or ‘self’. This is done by deep pondering and contemplation upon the teachings of the scriptures and understanding their esoteric meaning. Since Kumbhak refers to the holding of breath inside the body, this phase symbolically would refer to the aspirant not only studying the scriptures but permanently inculcating the auspicious virtues they teach in his own life (58).

59. A man who has experienced this ‘truth’ (i.e. the supreme consciousness residing in his bosom as his Atma, and the supreme Consciousness that prevails uniformly in this creation at the cosmic level) and firmly convinced in it is said to be liberated, delivered and emancipated. There is no doubt about it.

This realisation is symbolically achieved during the Kumbhak phase (59).

[Note—The Khumbhak phase is when the body is full of air held inside. This is a metaphoric way of saying that when the ascetic experiences the presence of super conscious Atma inside his being, he is completely fulfilled and overwhelmed with this experience so much so that nothing else can enter his mind anymore. He is soaked and completely drenched with the effusing sense of beatitude and felicity that accompanies self and Brahm realisation. Kumbhak phase is preceded by the Purak and followed by the Rechak. But in order to fill any pitcher it has first to be emptied, so for all practical purposed, the Rechak phase is done first, followed by the Purak which culminates in the Kumbhak phase.

So, in order to achieve truthful form of self and Brahm realisation, a spiritual aspirant should first purge all his spiritual impurities and corruptions from his inner self; he should eliminate all delusions and it’s after effects from his mental horizon; he should determine that he has got nothing to do with this artificial world and its material sense objects. This symbolises the Rechak phase of Pranayam.

Having thus emptied his inner self, he is now ready to accept knowledge and wisdom pertaining to the Truth for which he had set out in his spiritual journey in the first place. This is achieved by a thorough study of the scriptures, deeply pondering upon their teachings, and discussing their profound doctrines with those who are expert in them and themselves self-realised. This is equivalent to the Purak phase of Pranayam because it helps one to imbibe knowledge and fill one’s self with auspicious, righteous and noble thoughts and ideas that are cumulatively rejuvenating for the spirit.

Then comes the Kumbhak phase which stands for actually retaining these grand virtues in one’s inner self, thereby undergoing complete overhaul and re-moulding of the self from one that was tainted by worldly delusions to one who is as fresh and fragrant as a newly blossomed flower.]

60. [The following verse nos. 60-64 describe the physical exercise of Yoga and its utility to conquer the various 'Peeths' or the symbolic abodes where the different Gods who represent different forces of Nature reside in the body of the practitioner. This is a metaphoric way of saying that a successful practitioner of Yoga acquires such mystical powers and superior authority that he can not only command even the Gods but becomes superior to them. Since the Gods represent the various forces of Nature, such an aspirant is able to overcome all the hurdles created by these forces in his spiritual progress and attainment of self and Brahm realisation which are the ultimate aim of doing Yoga.]

While doing Kumbhak the practitioner of Yoga should visualize that the body is indeed like a 'Kumbh'—a hollow pitcher. Like one fills a pitcher with water or air, he should fill his inner-self with the Shiva Tattva, i.e. with the auspicious Principal and the supreme Absolute in creation that is known as Brahm or Shiva, the principle of truthfulness, auspiciousness, righteousness, eternity, imperishability and beauty.

Then, in this context, the Rechak would be to open the mouth of this pitcher represented by the throat. That is, after the phase of Kumbhak is over, the Rechak phase is done by exhaling breath through the opening of the throat, which is in the nostril (60).

61. After filling the inside of the body with air through Purak and Kumbhak phases, the practitioner of Yoga should sit calmly in a erect posture with his legs and hands remaining steady and unmoving; he should not be fidgety and restless (61).

62. He should pierce or rupture or open the four 'Peeths'¹ by doing the three steps of Pranayam (Purak, Kumbhak and Rechak). [When Pranayam is practiced properly, the practitioner gathers sufficient strength and energy that he is able to un-clog the previously blocked glands and other knot-like structures in the body which hinder the proper flow of vital forces of life, such as the vital winds and the stimuli of consciousness, throughout the body. This is akin to clogged drains, blocked pipes, chocked chimney or stuffed ventilators in a house; they need to be cleansed thoroughly and de-clogged to maintain proper flow of water and air in the house.]

Then the vital winds of the body should be made to enter the 'gate leading to the Maha Meru'. [The Meru is the mythological mountain where the Gods have their abode. This refers to the head where the supreme Shiva is said to have his abode—refer verse no. 53. The gates which have to be opened so that the Meru can be reached refer to the four Peeths mentioned herein above. By opening them through the practice of Yoga, the ascetic is able to witness the divine Shiva first hand.] (62).

[Note—¹Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 169-175 describes the location of the *four Peeths*. (i) The first Peeth is called the 'Kaam Roop Peeth' (verse no. 169-171). (ii) The second Peeth is called the 'Purna Giri Peeth' (verse no. 172-173). (iii) The third Peeth is called the 'Jalandhar Peeth' (verse no. 174). (iv) The fourth Peeth is called the 'Uddyan or Uddiyan Peeth' (verse no. 175).]

63. When the two doors are closed (i.e. when the nostrils in the upper part of the body and the anus in the lower part are closed during Pranayam) the vital winds or airs present inside the body are naturally made to swirl inside and subtly shake and vibrate the blocked knots and channels in the body. [That is, all the clogged nerves, veins, arteries, glands and other tissues are shaken and vibrated subtly to shed off their lethargy and indolence, and instead get activated, revitalized and rejuvenated.]

When this trapped wind force of life meets the other cosmic forces present inside the body, such as the subtle energy of the sun, the moon and the fire symbolically present in the navel, the heart and the throat regions respectively, the practitioner begins to experience the presence of Amrit, the symbolic elixir that provides extreme bliss and ecstasy, inside his own body in the form of the thrill and exhilaration that comes with realisation of the pure consciousness called the Atma. [When the grossness and rigidity of the body are eliminated, it becomes light and relaxed. Only such a body is able to enjoy anything. A man who is physically exhausted and weary will not enjoy even the choicest of food and drink. Even his favourite music would seem to create a headache to him. Everything is enjoyed by the body when it is rested and relaxed.] (63).

64. The Gods move in the Meru, and this movement of the divine Gods is revealed as life throbbing and pulsating in the spinal cord or the vertebral column which supports life in the body. [That is, the vital forces of Nature, the sensations and impulses that govern all activities of the body and its various organs, as well as the movement of the all-important consciousness that controls the very being of all living beings that have a body, moves along the nerves that form the spinal cord which passes through the vertebral column (the back bone). In other words, the spinal cord throbs and pulsates with life to symbolise the movement of these Gods inside the body. The Gods are the personification of the various auspicious forces of Nature that reside inside the body and control all its functions because the body is a microcosm of the creation. Therefore to say that the Gods move along the path of the spinal cord represented by the Sushumna Naadi to reach the top of the head where the Mt. Meru is located, an aphorism for the location of the brain which is the center of the mind and the intellect is to metaphorically say that the sensations and impulses from various corners of the body travel along the nerves and reach the command and control center of the body located in the brain which is situated in the head. The instructions of the brain are then taken back to the different parts of the body through the same channel. This to and fro movement of the vital forces of life and consciousness inside the body which keep it alive and active is symbolised by the movement of the Gods inside the body. If the Gods represent the forces of Nature in a personified form, then obviously the authority that controls these forces would be the Lord of all Gods, and it is the Shiva located in the head. This Shiva thus personifies the stupendous abilities of the mind-intellect to think, contemplate and analyse, to discriminate between the good and the bad, and to instruct the creature to act auspiciously, righteously, nobly, properly and judiciously with probity and propriety.]

In its attempt to reach the head (during the process of Pranayam etc.) the Vayu (vital winds) successively overcome various hurdles that come in its way by piercing through them. The first to be ruptured or overcome is the Brahm Granthi¹. [It is a common observation that air can enter an enclosure through the minutest of slit through which even water cannot perhaps seep in. In the present context it refers to the entry of the trapped vital winds—which are put under great pressure because of the closure of the external openings of the body, such as the anus, mouth and the nostrils, as done during various Bandhas and Pranayam—into the vertebral column and their subsequent massaging of the nerves that pass through this column. This subtle massaging by the warm air titillates the nerves and rejuvenates them. On the one hand it gives the

practitioner a sense of great thrill, and on the other hand it revives even the defunct nerves.] (64).

[Note—¹The word *Granthi* literally means node, a nodule or module or knot or a wart-like or a gland-like structure. It has various connotations depending upon the context in which the word is used. For instance, it might symbolically mean the different gates in a strong fort which must be overcome or broken before one enters the fort or overruns it as done during war times.

From anatomical point of view, the Granthis refer to the ganglions that help to coordinate the different nerves just like major junction boxes in the network of electric wires in a building. The word Granthi also refers to the glands that control all the major functions of the body, including those of the nerves and veins. Just like a knot that helps to tie something, these Granthis of the body bind the subtle energy present inside the body and prevent it from being dissipated or going to waste; it helps to preserve energy and stops it from being released if not wanted. If we treat them as representing the ganglions then it means that by the process of Yoga in which the subtle energy of the Kundalini is released in the spinal cord, or the Sushumna Naadi to be precise, these hitherto clogged and inactive ganglions are reactivated and they begin to function in prime shape. If we consider them as glands then it would mean that the functioning of these glands is restored by the process of Yoga, and this in turn helps the body to work properly.

The Granthi symbolises the center of power and authority because it is the nodal point from where all the authority needed for governance of the body spread out. It is also like the seat of power and authority of a king, much like the strong fortress from where he rules over the kingdom. They represent the nodal points in the body where the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva or Rudra the concluder, have their symbolic residence, and it is from here they control the functioning of the body of the individual as well as everything that he thinks and does. If the individual is regarded as the microcosm of the entire creation, then the Atma would be the supreme Brahm, and the various patron deities of the organs would be the different Gods of creation. The Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 70-71 describes the three main Granthis where these three Gods have their symbolic abodes in the body of the individual creature—viz. Brahm Granthi, Vishnu Granthi, and Rudra Granthi. They have also been described in Krishna Yajur Veda's Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 86-89, and Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 67-68, 85-86.

These Granthis can be also regarded as aphorisms for the numerous spiritual hurdles faced by a spiritual aspirant in his spiritual journey. The three Granthis are like the three forts that have to be overcome before the final victory over the citadel. If the body is considered as a metaphoric prison for the Atma of the aspirant, then rupturing of the various Granthis is like his breaking free from its walls and finally escaping to the world outside to gain freedom by rupturing the Brahm Randhra located on the top of the head in the final stages of Yoga.

The location of the Granthis is very significant in this context. Let us have a look at this aspect and see why these have been considered as formidable fortresses in this discussion.

The first Granthi known as the 'Brahm Granthi' is located in the region where the sexual organs are located. The very fact that Brahm in his manifestation as Brahma the creator is responsible for creating this world, the Granthi is so named after him because the sexual organs are responsible for creation. Overcoming this Granthi is tantamount to control over one's sexual urges which is a very formidable task under normal circumstances. Control of sexual instincts requires a lot of self-control, and once this is

successfully achieved the person retains his internal energy that is otherwise wasted in sexual indulgences. The power to create new life by the sexual process makes a man equivalent to Brahma the cosmic creator and the first of the Trinity Gods.

The second Granthi is known as 'Vishnu Granthi' and is located in the region of the subtle heart. Lord Vishnu is responsible for sustenance and taking care of the creation with care and love. The heart is associated with the virtues of emotions and sentiments as well as of love, compassion, kindness and graciousness as well as longing and desires. This Granthi symbolises the natural characteristics of the heart. It stands for worldly involvement and attachment with the numerous charming material sense objects of the world. It is the heart that makes a man emotionally and sentimentally involved and attached with the world. The obstacle of the heart is so formidable that more often than not the heart prevails over the sane advice given to the creature by his mind not to pursue certain things, and this overbearing nature of the heart only lands him in immense troubles. To overcome the natural impulses of the heart and bring it under control is tantamount to piercing of the second Granthi. Involvement with the world and its affairs is symbolised by the word Vishnu who is the second of the Trinity Gods.

Finally, the third Granthi is called the 'Rudra Granthi' as it is located in the head where the brain symbolising the mind and intellect with their formidable abilities is located. It is called 'Rudra' because when a man is unable to satisfy his urges and cannot obtain his desired objects, if his ego and pride are hurt, if he fails in any of his endeavours, if he finds that his compatriots succeed in anything in which he has failed, it is natural that he becomes angry, vengeful, wrathful and fretful. In other words, he displays the virtues of being 'Rudra' personified. It is an equally daunting task to control one's anger and its accompanying wrathfulness. Once an aspirant is able to control his anger along with the control of the other two natural urges, he becomes a truly self-controlled and realised soul. Display of the virtues of Rudra makes a man equivalent to Lord Shiva, another name of Rudra, who is the third of the Trinity Gods.

According to Tantra literature, there are three Granthis—viz. Brahm Granthi, Vishnu Granthi and Rudra Granthi. They obstruct the upwards movement of the energy or power of the Kundalini. Each of the six Chakras (whirling energy centers of the body) has two Granthis on either side.

The Brahm Granthi is situated between the Muladhar Chakra and Swadisthan Chakra. The Vishnu Granthi is situated between Manipur and Ahahat Chakras. The Rudra Granthi is located between Vishuddha Chakra and Agya (Gyan) Chakra. The energy or cosmic divine powers of the Kundalini has to pierce through these three knots before it can reach the Sahasraara Chakra at the top of the head.

The Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 67-74 and Yogshikha Upanishad, verse nos. 86-89 describe how the energy of the activated Kundalini passes through these Granthis to reach the top of the head and provide the practitioner of Yoga the exhilaration, ecstasy and bliss of experiencing the consciousness in its divine form.

According to the metaphysical interpretation of this term, the various Granthis are like the knots present in the heart that shackle the Atma and prevent its liberation and deliverance. These Granthis stand in the way of a man obtaining freedom from his fetters and keep him tied to this world. Once he is able to rupture them, he finds liberation even while he is still alive in this world. This fact has been clearly emphasized in Kathopanishad, Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no. 15 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

The term is used in Yoga philosophy—that relies on numerous physical exercises to enable a practitioner to liberate himself and his soul from the fetters that tie it down to this body and achieve deliverance as well as to harness the stupendous cosmic dynamic energy that lies trapped and hidden inside his own body—to indicate the various hurdles that come in the way of obtaining success in this spiritual endeavour. Refer Yog

Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 67-68, 85-86, and Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 86-87, 89.]

65. After first piercing through the Brahm Granthi, the vital airs break through the second and third Granthis called the Vishnu Granthi and the Rudra Granthi in succession (65).

[Note—The Vishnu Granthi and the Rudra Granthi have been described in not to verse no. 64 above.]

66. Once the Rudra Granthi is pierced, the next hurdle to be overcome in the spiritual path is Moha Granthi (the numerous attachments to and infatuation with the sense objects of the material world, longing for them and having a strong desire to acquire them and enjoy them—which together act like formidable spiritual blocks or knots or hurdles that need be dismantled or overcome before a spiritual aspirant can actually claim true freedom from the fetters of this world).

This Moha Granthi is such a hard nut to crack that it is made possible to do so only by the good influences of auspicious deeds and thoughts brought forward from one's past, as well as by the grace of an enlightened Guru (moral preceptor, guide and teacher) (66).

[Note—The negative virtues of having 'Moha'—i.e. possessing a sense of attachment with anything, having longing for it, being infatuated with it. Usually, this term Moha is applied in relation to the material sense objects of the world, but it also relates to one's attachment with the body, with other people around him, as well as to acquire name, fame and wealth. Moha also means delusions and its attending horrible spiritual consequences. Moha acts like a veil that obscures the truth from being viewed by the man. It leads him to commit errors and sins inadvertently because he is not even aware that he is acting wrongly. His mind is biased, deluded and corrupted. Moha is therefore like a formidable Granthi or knot because it is hard to crack like a nut.]

67. Only those ascetics who diligently practice the principles of Yoga are easily able to break these Granthis or knots which are like spiritual hurdles for a man.

There are three main Naadis, viz. the Ida, the Pingla and the Sushumna. The latter is located between the first two. These three Naadis are employed simultaneously to attain success in Yoga practices. Their coordinated effort is needed to successfully break this above mentioned Granthis. [The reason is that the process of Pranayam entails inhaling and exhaling breath in a controlled manner through the left and the right nostrils represented by the Ida and the Pingla Naadis respectively. The Sushumna Naadi is the path through which the Apaan wind and the subtle energy of the Kundalini rise up the spinal cord to reach the forehead, and finally the top of the head. The entire process of Yoga involves a number of complicated Aasans, Bandhas and Mudras besides Pranayam. All these individual exercises are to be coordinated properly like a symphony orchestra being played in order to enable the practitioner experience the bliss and ecstasy for which Yoga is so famous. On successful completion of Yoga, an ascetic can hear the Naad (cosmic vibrations) and taste the Bindu (drop) of Amrit (elixir of beatitude and felicity) that fills his entire being with extreme ecstasy and unbound bliss.] (67).

68. The various 'Mudras'¹ (bodily postures) of Yoga that help in practicing the different 'Bandhas'² (closures of the apertures of the body) are able to divert the vital winds of the body towards the head. Their gradual practice done patiently, diligently, silently (without

any show, pretensions and advertisement) is potent enough to destroy all the sins of the practitioner. [Since these Mudras and Bandhas are very difficult to practice, it is advisable for a beginner as well as for an ordinary practitioner to practice them in moderation. There are dangerous, and if not handled properly or done with proper care can be fatal or gravely injurious to the ascetic.]

However, if one has developed sufficient expertise and confidence to do them for a prolonged period of time and in a more robust form, it is then certain that these Mudras and Bandhas do have the potential and the power to provide Moksha (emancipation and salvation) to the practitioner. [Whereas when practiced at a lower level they can provide the benefit of freedom from sins, when they are practiced in their higher level they can reward the ascetic with complete liberation and deliverance altogether. Thus it is to be observed that Yoga presents a comprehensive solution to all the worldly problems of the ascetic.] (68).

[Note--¹The word *Mudra* means ‘bodily postures taken during meditative or Yoga sessions’. These are the following—‘Yoni’ (योनि), ‘Beej’ (बीज), ‘Khechari’ (खेचरी), ‘Mahankush’ (महानकुश), ‘Mahonmadini’ (महोनमादिनी), ‘Sarwawashankari’ (सर्ववशंकरी), ‘Sarwakarshini’ (सर्वाकर्षिणी), ‘Sarwavidravini’ (सर्वविद्राविणी), ‘Sarwa Sankshovini’ (सर्वसंश्लोभिणी).

The Vijay Tantra explains the esoteric meaning of Mudra thus—‘the company of the good leads to liberation and evil company to bondages; closure of evil company is termed as Mudra’.

The Mudra is a special body posture and positioning of its various external organs such as the hands, legs, head, etc. along with the various modes in which the mouth, tongue, eyes etc. are held. These Mudras form an integral part of formal forms of ritualistic worship involving Tantras (charm instruments) as well as during Japa (repetition of Mantras). These Mudras are said to harness the latent subtle and divine energy inherently present in the body of the worshipper and harmonize it with the cosmic energy of the deity being worshipped in order to bring about an integration between them and enabling the practitioner to become one with the deity.

The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, 1/3/5; and 2/1/5, 8 describe some of the Mudras and their benefits. They have been also listed in Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda in its verse nos. 26-27. The Yog Kundalini Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda describes the Khechari Mudra in great detail in its Canto 2 which is dedicated entirely to it.

²According to Yoga Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 41 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition says that there are three main types of Bandhas—Mool Bandha, Uddiyan Bandha and Jalandhar Bandha. The word *Bandha* literally means ‘the closing of the subtle apertures of the body through which the Pran or the vital winds could escape when pressure is exerted on them while doing Pranayam’. Thereafter, verse nos. 42-52 describe these Bandhas in the context of arousing the latent energy of the Kundalini and helping it rise up in the Sushumna Naadi which ultimately lead the practitioner of Yoga to experience the bliss of consciousness realisation.

Refer also to Canto 5, verse nos. 6-7, 44-45 of this Varaaha Upanishad which says that the Bandhas are the following—Uddiyan Bandha, Samput Bandha and Mool Bandha.]

69. The ascetic should practice to pronounce the syllables of the ethereal Mantra OM consisting of the three alphabets (A, U and M) for a protracted time in such a way that there is no pause, gap or break between pronouncing any two letters of OM, or between

pronouncing two OM's one after another, just like the way oil flows in a continuous and unbroken stream on a flat and smooth surface.

This causes a resonance of the ethereal sound of Naad in the head which resembles the reverberating sound of a heavy gong hitting a huge brass bell (69).

[Note—Refer Canto 4, verse nos. 1.11-2 of this Upanishad.]

70. This practice of hearing the Naad and pronouncing of OM helps the spiritual aspirant to get acquainted with and have an easy access to the cosmic Divinity known as Pranav or Brahm which is otherwise not known and not accessible as it is formless, unqualified, invisible, beyond the reach of gross organs of perception, and has no attributes whatsoever. This experience provides him with a sense of extreme ecstasy and contentedness at having had a contact or communion with this entity that is divine and cosmic.

The three letters of OM, viz. A, U and M are metaphors for the three stages of Brahm realisation. The first letter 'A' stands for the awareness and the first sign of the presence of Pranav or Brahm in the form of cosmic vibrations heard as Naad and conceptualized in the form of the eclectic word OM. This is what those who are experts in the chief doctrines of Vedas assert.

The protracted or prolonged sound of the second letter, the vowel 'U', is symbolic of the Bindu or the 'dot' which is placed on the top of the first vowel 'A' to produce its nasal sound. [That is, the letter 'A' with a dot on the top would sound as 'rum' or 'come' or 'sum'. Sometimes it is also pronounced as 'rung', or 'clung'. If this combination is pronounced for a protracted time, it would have a resonating affect.]

The concluding letter is the third one, viz. 'M', which is indicative of final rest when the ascetic has managed to take his Pran (vital winds) to the Brahm Randhra (the slit-like opening on the top of the skull) from where it finally escapes out of the body to provide final liberation and deliverance to the ascetic. After pronouncing 'M' the Mantra ends and the mouth is closed. This is also a metaphoric way of saying that the ascetic has found his final rest and ultimate peace.

When this Mantra called OM begins to resonate in all the twelve Naadis (listed in verse nos. 23-28), it is greatly enhanced because of the presence of the twelve vital winds in them as well. [Refer Canto 5, verse no. 28, 32-34 in this context. The enhancement is made possible because the vibrations created by the humming or chanting of OM produce strong currents in the vital winds already present in the twelve important Naadis which result in a dramatic increase of the decibel level in which the cosmic Naad is heard. By and by the sound completely overwhelms the ascetic to such an extent that he hears nothing else except the sound of the Naad.]

When this stage is reached, it is said that the ascetic has gained full benefit of the Mantra and has consequentially gained the mystical powers that accompany such accomplishment. Now, he can use this Mantra to successfully finish any task he wants to do (70).

71-72. This Mantra of Pranav or Brahm, viz. OM, is potent enough to eliminate all spiritual obstacles.

There are four Bhumikas (stages of development of spiritual wisdom as described in detail in Canto 4)—viz. (i) 'Aarambha'—the beginning or initiation when one decides that he would find true wisdom and the correct path that would provide him with final

emancipation and salvation; (ii) 'Ghat'—the acceptance and the subsequent filling of the inner self with noble thoughts and wisdom, becoming stable, calm, quiet, unmoving and unruffled like the air present inside an empty pitcher; (iii) 'Parichaya'—introduction to, becoming aware of and getting acquainted with the cosmic Divinity that is present inside one's inner-self as the all-powerful consciousness known as the Atma; introduction to and acquaintance with the highly evolved and developed path of erudition, enlightenment and wisdom that enables an aspirant to become aware of his pure conscious self and the fact that this 'self' of his is the same as the cosmic 'Self' of creation that is known as the all-pervading and almighty Consciousness that universally resides in the bosom of all living beings as their 'self', and that this is the only spiritual Truth in this existence [71], and (iv) 'Nishpati'—completion or consummation of this process which implies the hearing of the cosmic Naad and tasting of the elixir of eternal bliss and ecstasy, known as Amrit, that comes with self-realisation and Brahm-realisation, and reaching the final frontier of spiritual practice which culminates in obtaining liberation and deliverance of the soul, the final emancipation and salvation whereby the individual soul merges with the supreme Soul of the cosmos, never to take birth again. This is the ultimate goal which any wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant would yearn for, would strive for, would aspire for and endeavour to attain.

Now each of these four stages is being elaborated upon. The 'beginning or initiation' is when the spiritual aspirant abandons all his involvement with the external world and its activities that have three causes¹ for coming into being [72]. (71-72).

[Note—¹The *three causes* that on the one hand result in the creation of the world and on the other hand can find a solution for this malady itself are the following—(i) Upaadaan—the word means 'acceptance, acquisition, knowledge; restraining of the sense organs; a material from which something is prepared, the ingredient'. All these connotations can be applied here. For instance, the man first acquires the knowledge of this external material world and all its sense objects, and then accepts its existence as a matter of fact. Since the existence of this world is based on belief and information, and since this world can be accepted only through the medium of the sense organs of the body, it can be eliminated by the same means. That is, elimination of the deluding and artificial world can be achieved only by acquisition of correct knowledge and beliefs along with practicing restriction of the sense organs. These organs are responsible for the man becoming aware of the existence of the world and its most alluring charms, no matter how illusory or transient or painful they are in the long run. They entangle him in their web and tie him down in a vice-like grip with false promises of happiness, pleasure and comfort. If a man falls prey to this bait, he is trapped, while if he has the right knowledge and wisdom he would see right through the trick and avert a catastrophic destiny for himself.

(ii) Asamvaachi—to attempt to unite two dissimilar things into one entity; to try in futility to bring harmony between two basically disharmonious entities. For instance, it is like trying to unite water with fire. In the present case, this would mean to imagine something to be true although it is fundamentally and irrefutably false. That is, to imagine that this world is true and that it would indeed give peace and happiness is as incredulous and ridiculous to believe as imagining that the water seen in a desert mirage would actually quench one's thirst. As is obvious here, this utterly fallacious and basically erroneous conception can be removed only by correct knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment that comes with study of the scriptures and good company of saints and other holy men.

(iii) *Nimitta*—the word means ‘motive, cause, reason, factor etc. which is the progenitor of something or some event; something done on behalf, or on account of’. For instance, the potter is the creator of the clay pot; he is a means by which the formless clod of earth is given a definitive shape, design and size. So if there was no potter, there would be no pot with this shape or size. In the present context, the spiritual aspirant researches the cause of the coming into being of this world although it is universally accepted in the scriptures that it is false and illusionary. He wanders how this happens—one the one hand it is false, and on the other hand he can actually experience and witness the presence of the gross world first hand thereby proving that it does not exist. It is then that he begins to ponder on the great metaphysical doctrines and axiomatic maxims enshrined in the scriptures, and espoused and expounded by them repeatedly. Regular and discreet study of the scriptures with an open mind and a sincere desire to learn and benefit from their teachings helps the man to discover the hidden ‘truth’ that cannot be seen by the physical eye of the body. He finds that it is his imaginative mind that has visualized this world to appease the sense organs. Therefore the remedy is also in the mind itself—and it is to stop imagining and become real. The mind, the aspirant realises, has to be leashed in and channelised properly to derive real spiritual benefit from its stupendous powers that were being misused by it in pursuance of falsehood and artificiality known as the world. He discovers that what is seen, heard, felt, smelt and tasted is not always the ‘real and irrefutable truth’ of any thing or event. It is often misleading and far from the actual thing. For instance, the water in the mirage seen in the hot desert is very evident, but everyone knows that there is no water in it. Similarly, vested interests spread false rumors about certain things to suit their purpose, but it would be highly foolish to rely on them. When one suffers from high fever one feels extremely chilly though it may be a hot summer day with a scorching sun beating relentlessly down on earth. A sick man may not be able to relish any taste in food which might be as delicious and tasty as it can ever be for a healthy man. Artificial scents create an impression of fragrant flowers in the vicinity though there may be none nearby.]

73. Instead (of being outwardly and extrovert, instead of allowing his sense organs to run after their objects in the external world), a wise and enlightened aspirant should concentrate upon the activities that are related to the inner-self, and focus on its purification and enhancement. He should endeavour to turn the focus of his mind and intelligent inwards in researching the truth about his own ‘self’ and the pure cosmic Consciousness that resides in his own bosom as his *Atma*.

The vital winds of the body control all its functions and activities, both the external ones as well as the internal ones. Therefore it is of utmost importance to control and harness them. [That is, all the organs and tissues function under the influence of the vital winds. If one wind fails, the relevant organ or tissue suffers and stops to function properly. In other words, the tendency of the organs of perception to be outwardly can be effectively checked if one can check the relevant vital wind. Refer *Pran Agnihotra Upanishad*, verse no. 11 as well as this Canto 5 of the present *Varaaha Upanishad* which describe how *Pran* is controlled. So if a person is able to check all the vital winds, he can put a tight leash on this entire body and control even the involuntary actions such as digestion and hunger, circulation of blood and breathing, passage of stool and urine, etc. The mind would be then freed from the constant bombardment of impulses that are gathered by the organs and the necessity of issuing constant guidance to them. Then the freed mind would have the time and the inclination to concentrate its energy and strength on achieving successes in higher goals of life. That is why great emphasis is laid on first

controlling of the vital winds during Yoga, because without this nothing worthwhile is achievable.]

When the vital winds are controlled and put under tight leash, the spiritual aspirant is able to overcome all hurdles and become stabilized in his body (i.e. is able to overcome the natural tendency of the body to remain restless and fidgety) just like the air inside a pitcher is stable and unmoving as compared to the air present outside the pitcher¹ (73).

[Note--¹This is the *first Bhumika*. This entails turning away from being extrovert and preventing one's sense organs from being outwardly mobile, and instead become focused on the inner self. It means to control the organs of the body and the mind to get naturally attracted by the charms proffered by the material objects of the external world, and instead concentrate their combined energy on realising the stupendous potentials of the 'self' and the pure conscious Atma.

The various Bhumikas have been described in detail also in Canto 4 of the present Upanishad.]

74. Those who are experts in this spiritual field, are wise and erudite, call the stage when an aspirant is able to control his vital airs and thereby become self-controlled, self-restrained, serene, unruffled, calmed and tranquil, symbolically indicating the attainment of a high degree of stability and steadfastness which are absolute necessary pre-requisites for success in any endeavour, what to speak of spiritual endeavour which is all the more difficult and painstaking as compared to worldly successes. It indicates steadiness of purpose, calmness of demeanours, a settled mind and fully restrained organs of the body—i.e. a stage when the spiritual aspirant has been able do away with all the restlessness and the fickleness that are so typical of the mind and the body.

This is called the 'Ghat Bhumika'¹ which marks a significant progress in his quest for spiritual enhancement, and attainment of final liberation and deliverance (74).

[Note—¹The *Ghat Bhumika* has two connotations as follows. (i) When the spiritual aspirant has become steady in mind and body, he is said to have attained the exalted stage which is compared with the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam when the winds are steadily held inside the body which is completely steady, calm and unmoving with all external exit points, such as the nostrils and anus, being closed. The man then becomes focused on his inner-self in the absence of all external disturbances, instead of routinely running outwards towards the sense objects of the material world.

(ii) There is another connotation to this symbolism as indicated by the word 'Ghat' which means a pitcher or vessel. The air inside the closed confines of this Ghat is completely calm and still; it is not all affected by the strong gust of wind blowing outside the body of the Ghat. So, the Ghat Bhumika refers to the stable state of the aspirant's mind and body which is comparable to the steadiness and calmness of the air inside the pitcher as compared to the ever agile, ever mobile and ever fickle nature of the air present outside the body of the pitcher. The spiritual aspirant becomes absolutely calm and quietened as he has reached the higher stages of Yoga and has sufficiently advanced in his spiritual quest. The turmoil of the external world does not disturb him in the least. Even as the air inside the pitcher remains calm and unmoving inspite of a fierce storm raging outside the pitcher, the aspirant remains calm, serene, indifferent and in quietude inspite of the turbulent world outside. He is absolutely unruffled and exemplarily unconcerned and detached from everything.]

²The Ghat Bhumika is the *second Bhumika*.]

75. It is the Atma, the pure consciousness and the true 'self' of the ascetic, that is responsible for creation of this world through the medium of the body consisting of both the gross organs such as the organs of perceptions and organs of action, as well as the subtle organ of the mind-intellect complex. Hence, being the creator or progenitor of this creation (world), it is the Atma itself which can conclude it or bring it to an end, and no body else.

Therefore, the stage when the spiritual aspirant has realised this quintessential truth about the Atma vis-à-vis the body and the world is said to be Jivan Mukta—i.e. one who has obtained liberation and deliverance even while he is alive, has kept his gross body, and lives normally in this world. [This is because he would not be 'personally' involved with either the activities of the body or the world. The word 'personally' here would not mean his body but his Atma which would remain a mute spectator and non-involved with everything and in anything. It is like freeing oneself from the serfdom of the body as well as the world. The Atma disassociates itself from everything related to the gross and perishable body as well as the equally gross and perishable world.]¹

When this thinking and behaviour becomes natural to the aspirant, when it is not artificially done by him to gain praise and honour, when he is not acting as an imposter trying to pose as an upright, wise, self-realised and enlightened man to deceive others with ulterior motives, when he has no pretensions of being holy and pious man while slyly eyeing this world and its material objects which would be showered upon him by faithful devotees who would fall prey to his deceitful behaviour—it is then that he is said to have accomplished complete success in obtaining his spiritual objectives. He is fulfilled and complete; he has obtained the 'Nishpati Bhumika' which is the last of the four Bhumikas and the culmination of Yoga and spiritual practice². (75).

[Note—¹This awareness of the Truth is the *third Bhumika* called the 'Parichaya Bhumika'.

²This 'Nishpati Bhumika' is the *fourth Bhumika*. Refer verse no. 71-72.]

76. Thus ends this Upanishad and its profound auspicious teaching.

He who studies and implements the tenets of this Upanishad becomes as exalted, honourable and auspicious as if he was the offspring of the Fire God, i.e. he becomes as pure, potent and powerful as the fire element. He becomes as exalted, honourable and auspicious as if he was the son of the Wind God, i.e. he becomes as pure, potent and powerful as the wind element.

This Upanishad is so potent and spiritually effective that if a man studies it diligently and implements its principles in his life he is absolved of the misdeeds done under the influence of drinking wine. Similarly, he is freed from the sin of stealing gold¹.

Such a man becomes 'Jivan Mukta'—i.e. he becomes freed from the fetters that shackle him to this delusory world and the gross body even while he is alive and interacts with both the world as well as the gross body.

All that has been said and asserted in this Upanishad has been proclaimed in the Richas (hymns or Mantras) of the Vedas and affirmed by them.

The attainment of the supreme stature of liberation and deliverance is akin to attaining the divine abode of Lord Vishnu. A wise and enlightened aspirant focuses his sight on it. This supreme abode is glorious and illuminated, and it is here that all the Gods have their exalted abode as well. It is here that all the enlightened souls go to take their final rest. This is such an exalted and divine abode of Lord Vishnu as described and

asserted by the Upanishads. [This divine abode of Vishnu is actually the abode of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, all-pervading and invisible form of the Supreme Being known as the transcendental Brahm. In other words, the soul of the spiritually enlightened person seeks to become one with the Viraat Purush and become uniformly dissolved like the latter in the vast fathoms of the cosmos. That is, an enlightened ascetic hopes to shed his gross body and become a universal soul that has no physical boundaries and attributes like the body. Now, he can ever remain free and unshackled.]

OM salutations! Oh Lord, protect us, give us peace and tranquility. OM (Pranav or Brahm) and Hari (Vishnu) are indeed the Absolute and the only Truth in creation. Amen! (76).

[Note—¹It must be clearly understood that this immunity from punishment is not intended to be a blanket license for breeding sins and evil. It is meant as a device for those persons who have committed sins and other spiritual errors unawares and sincerely wish to atone for their sins and misdemeanors. The scriptures provide a ray of hope to them for their redemption. It must be remembered that the main purpose of the scriptures is a man's spiritual redemption and not to gain sadistic pleasure in his sufferings. A man is liable to commit wrong in his life; after all 'to err is human' goes the saying. But a wise man would be called 'wise' if he wakes up and endeavours to redeem himself instead of allowing himself to roll in the filth which he had inadvertently stepped into. So, this Upanishad like many others shows him the path for redemption and salvation.]

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(IV—H) Yog Shikha Upanishad

The Yogshikha Upanishad has six elaborate Cantos dealing with the concept of Yoga. The word 'Shikha' literally means 'a peak, a crest, an apex, a flame, the highest point'. Hence the composite word obviously refers to the knowledge which helps the wise person who possesses it to reach the climax of spiritual achievements that is possible by employing Yoga as a tool for this purpose. This eclectic knowledge ignites the hidden potentials in him like a flame of light that removes the darkness of ignorance and its attendant delusions.

Yoga and Gyan are the two famous paths of Brahm realisation or becoming knowledgeable about the ultimate, immutable and absolute Truth of creation. This Brahm realisation is equivalent to 'self' realisation because the Atma or the pure consciousness of all living beings and the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm are one and the same. This Upanishad presents a magnificent judicious mix of metaphysical philosophy of Yoga based on the principles of Vedanta along with the Tantra philosophy of Yoga and its practical aspect of exercises and meditation techniques.

This Upanishad is one of the 'revealed Upanishads' because it was revealed by Lord Shiva to Brahma the creator. Shiva is an expert ascetic and the patron God of all ascetics as well as the Lord who controls the function of bringing the creation to a conclusion; he is regarded as the greatest spiritual teacher, highly self-realised, most enlightened and the wisest amongst the Gods.

This Upanishad is very similar to other Upanishads on Yoga, such as Jabal Darshan, Yogchudamani, Paingal and Yogkundali. The Yogtattva Upanishad is of special interest because both these two Upanishads are revealed ones—the present one, the Yogshikha, is revealed by Lord Shiva who is not only the greatest ascetic himself but also the patron God of all ascetics and is considered as the universal moral preceptor or Guru of all living beings in this creation, while the other one, the Yogtattva was preached by Lord Vishnu who is the protector and sustainer of this creation besides being the Viraat Purush himself personified. In both the cases however the one who is preached is Lord Brahma who is the creator of this visible world as well as all knowledge required to guide the creatures and encoded in the form of the Vedas. Therefore, with such enlightened and all-knowing teachers and a disciple who himself is no less wise, these two Upanishads act as the two prime treatises on Yoga.

Another interesting spin-off of this fact is that all the concepts of Yoga as narrated in this Upanishad are pregnant with both the Vedanta philosophy as well as the Tantra philosophy—in fact it presents a comprehensive amalgam of both of them, and herein lie its beauty. It brings under one umbrella various Yoga concepts which have been mentioned in a brief and succinct language because the listener is Brahma who himself was wise and learned and needed no great explanation at length. So elaborate notes have been appended to the verses as and when required for the purpose of our study so that these concepts are easily understood by the reader as he goes along with the main text.

The probable reason why Brahma approached Shiva to preach him on Yoga though Brahma was himself no less wise as he had created the Vedas which are considered as the repositories of all knowledge is the fact that Shiva was an expert Yogi and therefore considered as the wisest teacher on the subject who had put into practice the teaching of the Vedas created by Brahma who had only a theoretical knowledge of the subject. Shiva was deemed to be more competent and expert on the subject of Yoga with all its different connotations. Besides this, this format of question and answer was a standard method of collating and bringing together in a cohesive, comprehensive and easy to understand format a vast array of information and knowledge pertaining to any given metaphysical subject which was otherwise spread across the large volumes of the numerous scriptures and therefore hitherto inaccessible for an ordinary person. Hence, this Yogshikha Upanishad is like a pocket ready-reckoner on the subject of Yoga taught by Shiva, the wisest and most enlightened teacher of the subject being the patron God of all ascetics, to Brahma the creator who himself was an equally wise and enlightened disciple God as he is the one who has created all the four Vedas which are repositories of all available knowledge in creation, but who has assumed a role of a disciple for the sake of knowledge.

The very fact that Brahma had thought it fit and proper to approach Shiva to hear and learn the secrets and profound tenets of metaphysics and spiritualism inspite of being the creator of the world and all its knowledge himself proves that Shiva is superior to him and therefore fits the bill of being Maheshwar or the 'Great God' perfectly. It also shows that knowledge is not an exclusive domain of any single person matter how enlightened and wise he might be, and a truly wise man is one who continues to seek knowledge from whatever source it is available and in any form throughout his life; there should be no element of shame in it or the feeling of being inferior to others in terms of the level of knowledge.

Amongst the numerous interesting facts narrated in this Upanishad are the genesis of the spoken word and the different notes of music as described in verse nos. 2-9 of Canto 3 along with the concept of Bindu and Naad which have been elaborately dealt with in Canto 1, verse nos. 105, 167, 178, Canto 2, verse nos. 6, and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-10. An astounding array of metaphors and analogies has been cited in Canto 4 to describe what Brahm is. The human body is treated as a holy city and the abode of both Lords Vishnu and Shiva. This city has ten doors, ten avenues, ten life forces moving on these avenues, six city circles called Chakras, six forests or green belts, four Peeths or pedestals, four lamp posts and two signs. These have been described in Canto 1, verse nos. 72, 165-167, and Canto 5, verse nos. 2-5.

The importance of Gyan (truthful knowledge) vis-à-vis Agyan (ignorance or lack of knowledge), and their relationship with Yoga (meditation and bringing about a fusion between the various aspects of Truth) have been elaborately explained in Canto 1, verse nos. 1-80. The detailed process of Yoga with all its various limbs and branches have been discussed in the rest of the verses of Canto 1. Canto 2 describes why and how a Mantra is regarded as a symbol or Linga of Divinity here represented by Lord Shiva. Canto 3 elucidates upon the finer aspects of Naad (the cosmic vibrations from which the dynamic energy of creation emerged) as a symbolic manifestation of Brahm; Canto 4 deals with the metaphysical question of relationship between Brahm, the Supreme Being, and the individual creature called the Jiva; it explains the concept of non-duality or Advaitya by citing various instances. Canto 5 is a sort of reiteration of what has been said in the four preceding Cantos.

Canto 6 deals with the concept of Naadis and the movement of Pran in them, the activation of the various Chakras, the location of different divine Shaktis (energies) in the body itself, how one does an involuntary Japa (repetition) using the Mantra 'Hans' and the significance of it, importance of Mana (mind) and Chitta (sub-conscious), the role of Ahankar (ego and pride), and how the practitioner of Yoga can achieve true Mukti (liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation) and 'dissolution of the self' by following its tenets.

It would be also observed that Canto 5 has an uncanny resemblance to Canto 1, verse nos. 162-178, Canto 2, verse nos. 12-22, and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-12. The fact that the same concepts are repeated once again shows one of two probabilities—either Shiva had preached Brahma on two separate occasions, or he had repeated the concepts to drive home their great importance and significance.

Canto 1

1. Once, Brahma (the creator) went to Lord Shiva (the expert ascetic and the patron God of all ascetics as well as the lord of conclusion of creation; the greatest spiritual teacher, one who is self-realised, and is regarded as the wisest amongst the Gods) and politely asked him, 'Oh Lord! All the creatures are tied in strong fetters created by Maya (ignorance-caused delusions and their attendant problems in this world). These fetters trap them in a web or net of Sukha and Dukha (i.e. in a continuous cycle of happiness, pleasures, comforts and joys on the one hand, and sorrows, miseries, agonies and

grieving on the other hand). They are not able to break free from this net, are constantly buffeted by them and suffer as a consequence.

Please describe the way that they can find liberation and deliverance from it (1).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 4-5.]

The concept of Maya has been explained at length elsewhere in other Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition in this volume—viz. as a note of verse no. 13 of Kaivalya Upanishad, Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 87, and Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 33.]

2. Tell me that path which is a panacea of all ills, the path that bestows all successes and Siddhis (mystical powers that one automatically acquires upon spiritual elevation), that is powerful enough to break the fetters created by Maya (delusions) and liberate the trapped creature, that can eliminate such horrors as birth, death, old age and various diseases that torment him, and which can provide happiness and spiritual comforts to the creature' (2).

3. When Hiranyagarbha (Brahma) asked this question, Lord Maheshwar (literally the great Lord, the great Ishwar, Lord Shiva) replied—'The best form of liberation and deliverance which is rare and only one of its kind is called 'Kaivalya'—the only one. This supreme stature of existence for the creature's soul is called 'Param Pada', the most exalted and eclectic state of existence. There are not myriad of ways to reach it; there is only one way. If attempt is made to take numerous paths to reach this eclectic stature, it becomes all the more difficult to attain it; it goes beyond reach. [This is like the case of jumping from boat to boat in order to reach the other side of the river, or the case of too many cooks spoiling the broth.] (3).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 5-6 also.]

4. Oh the one created out of the divine lotus¹ (i.e. Brahma)! This Kaivalya Pada is obtainable only by following the path called 'Siddhi Marg' or the path that is spiritually liberating and paves the way for acquisition of certain divine and mystical authority, power and prowess that are natural to such spiritual attainment. There are no other alternatives.

A person who thinks himself to be intelligent and learned gets entangled in the web created by the numerous scriptures and the various versions of the same path shown by them. He tries to be logical and derive rational ways to achieve his goal by delving in the voluminous tomes of the scriptures and spending his lifetime trying to unravel their secrets, without reaching any conclusion. This creates confusion and perplexities for him; he gets bogged down with uncertainties, gets flummoxed with contradictory interpretations of the scriptures and their doctrines, and consequentially instead of crossing the ocean he gets drowned in it (4).

[Note—¹According to Purans, the mythological ancient histories of the Hindus, Brahma the creator of the visible world was born atop a divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu, the macrocosmic manifestation of the Supreme Being, while he lay reclining on the bed of the huge serpent floating on the surface of the legendary ocean of celestial milk called the 'Kshir Sagar'.]

5. The supreme entity (known as Brahm) that is the target of all spiritual research and practices is self-illuminated (like the celestial sun). Say, can it ever be illuminated by the

scriptures? Can anyone ever hope to see that eternal source of light by the help of a candle light?

That supreme transcendental entity is 'Nishkal', i.e. it is without any blemishes, taints, faults and corruptions that are the dominant characteristics of this world. It is 'Nirmal', i.e. it is immaculate, pure, clean and taintless. It is 'Shaanta', i.e. it is peaceful, tranquil, serene, calm, unruffled and rested. It is 'Sarwateet', i.e. it is transcendental and beyond everything in existence. It is 'Niramaye', i.e. it is free from all the symbolic ailments that afflict and torment the rest of the manifested world and its creatures; it is free from all spiritual diseases and warts that ail and deform the rest of the creation (5).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 7-8 also.]

6. When the same immaculate and neutral, supreme and transcendental entity which has no gross forms and worldly attributes assumes the role of a Jiva (a living being with a gross body), it gets surrounded by the veil cast by deeds and their consequences¹.

The supreme transcendental cosmic consciousness called the Parmatma, the supreme Soul, is eternal and non-dual. Say how can it become a Jiva?

[That is, even the Supreme Being who created this myriad and colourful world himself, if he allows himself to be charmed by its deceptive nature and lured by its enticing attractions, and get confused by doubts as to what is the reality and what is not, he would become like an ordinary Jiva or an ordinary living being who lives in this mirage-like world and remains perpetually trapped in its web of illusions and delusions. It is like the case of the presence of water in the mirage seen in a hot desert—the water is obviously not there, but a man who sees that mirage would swear by his life that he is actually seeing real water.] (6).

[Note—¹The Skanda Upanishad succinctly describes this concept of Jiva and Brahm. Briefly, when the supreme consciousness, which is essentially ethereal and formless, begins to think that it has a gross identity marked by the presence of the gross body and the world around it, it gets mired and entangled by the web of deeds done by the body and the various relationships that it develops with this artificial and deluding world. As every action will necessarily have a relevant reaction, there is created a chain of deeds and their consequences. This acts like an iron-shackle for the otherwise pure, ethereal and inherently liberated consciousness, bogging it down like an ordinary creature of the world called a Jiva.

Refer also to Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 9 and 11.]

7. That great Lord called Mahadev (referring to the Supreme Being) is beyond the reach of the world created by various elements called Tattvas¹; he transcends the definitions of the world bounded and limited by various Tattvas.

He is beyond the purview and reach of all material things as well as all places in existence. [This is because he surrounds everywhere from the outside like a boundary wall, and there is no creation outside the limits created by this Mahadev.]

He is beyond all notions and concepts, as well as of honours and epithets. He is an embodiment of Gyan (truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment). He is without any blemishes and faults (7).

[Note—¹The various *Tattvas* have been described in Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 12-13, and in Sharirako-panishad, verse nos. 16, 18-20.]

8. [This verse describes the initial phases of creation. Refer also to Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 9.]

In that neutral cosmic ethereal entity which primarily had no sign of activity, there appeared some form of subtle and almost imperceptible wave-like movement as it is usually seen in the movement of air. [When the static air begins to move, it is so subtle and soft that it almost passes notice until the time it gathers sufficient energy and speed to be felt by the skin as breeze. No one can actually 'see' the waves in the air, but it is an undeniable fact of science that sound travels from one point to the other point in the form of waves in air. When these waves gather speed, we can actually hear their movements in the form of a howl of wind blowing across our ears, and we can actually feel its movement against our faces.]

The next thing to happen was the creation of 'Ahankar', i.e. the subtle element that marks such traits as having a sense of pride, ego and haughtiness that are hidden in the bosom of the creature and influence his character. [It should be noted here that Ahankar is also one of the four components that make up the inner self or the Antahakaran of all living beings or Jiva. Refer Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 4 of Krishna Yajur Veda.]

Then came into being a Pinda or an egg-like entity (the cosmic embryo) consisting of five primary subtler elements (such as the earth, water, fire, air and sky), and enclosed by the shell of grosser elements (such as blood, flesh, bones, marrow, veins and nerves etc.)¹.

Since there was a definitive shape and structure of this cosmic egg, however invisible and subtle it was, it was bound to have certain Gunas, or virtues and qualities, which were characteristic to it, and which would determine the unique nature, personality and character of the would-be offspring that would emerge from this cosmic egg in due course². (8).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 10, 12-13 also.]

²These Gunas are three in number, such as Sata, Raja and Tama. They have been briefly outlined in Sharrirako-panishad, verse no. 7-13.]

9. When this happened, the supreme primary entity that primarily had been neutral and without any attributes tainting its inherently immaculate nature and pristine pure character now got tainted and was influenced by so many factors that it got deluded into thinking that it is assumed a form with certain Gunas or attributes and qualities (as described in verse no. 8 above). It began to think that something has come into being with a definite character and attribute.

What was that which came into being? It was an egg inside which there was an embryo with a certain shape and form and texture (as described in verse no. 8), and it was surrounded by a shell. This embryo later hatched into a living being or creature with a body. So the supreme Brahm or Parmatma began to identify himself as a Jiva with a gross body. [The shell of the cosmic egg transformed into the grosser protective layer of the skin, flesh and bones of the newly born Jiva or the living creature, and the embryo itself formed this Jiva. Naturally therefore, all the ingredients that helped give the embryo its shape and identity transferred themselves into the new Jiva. How the elements shaped the body of the Jiva have been clearly described in Sharrirako-panishad, verse nos. 1-13.]

Hence, the very thought of the Parmatma, the Supreme Being or Brahm, that he has got such and such qualities or possesses certain attributes made him believe that he

was a Jiva, the living being. Otherwise, the Parmatma is supreme and transcendental, remaining free from any limitations and definitions that are artificially created when some or the other attribute or quality is assigned to any given entity. The Parmatma is beyond the purview of any kind of definition and attribute which act like taints upon his immaculate nature. [Something that is perfect and absolute, that is infinite, indescribable and beyond comprehension would be scarred by being delineated, encased and limited if one were to assign certain specific attributes to it because each quality or attribute has its inherent limitations and gives a fixed idea of what it means, and would therefore imply that the entity under study is limited by this particular attribute, that the attribute in question defines it and draws a line around it, that this particular attribute is its defining quality which dominates its character and is more important than the other qualities. This sort of limits something that is limitless; it sort of limits something within certain definitions and criterions. For instance, if we say that there is light in the room, then the question arises what type of light is it, what is its intensity and colour, what is the source, was there darkness before it, is it sufficient etc. Suppose one says that the Supreme Being is all-knowing, then the question arises why is this particular quality being highlighted? Does it mean that the Supreme Being's main quality is being all-knowing and the other qualities are of lesser significance? If we say the ocean is salty then someone would say 'how salty'? In short, something that cannot be defined is best left alone as being indefinable, and no specific attributes ought to be assigned to it because this would be tantamount to imposing limitations on it and drawing a defining parameter wall around it] (9).

[Note—The very fact that the Parmatma lost his neutrality and began to think in terms of possessing the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama), or having a gross body that lives in this world and interacts with it, a body that can enjoy or suffer and that does deeds and expects results from such deeds, or that the world actually exists at all inspite of being omniscient and all-knowing about the truth of creation, and so on and so forth, it is natural that he fell from his exalted stature of being 'supreme'. It is then that this Parmatma becomes a Jiva or an ordinary living being. Conversely, if the Jiva realises the truth and disassociates himself from the delusions created by this world and the body, if he is able to overcome the various taints and imperfections typical of this life and as enumerated in the Upanishads, then it is natural that such a Jiva rises to the exalted stature of being a Parmatma. In brief, when the Atma is engrossed in the world and its accompanying delusions, it is called a Jiva, and if it is able to realise its true nature by 'self-realisation' it elevates itself to the exalted stature of a Parmatma.]

10-11. [These two verses list the numerous faults and shortcomings in the character and mental setup of the creature which prevents the latter from becoming one like the supreme Lord of creation because they act as drags on his spiritual upliftment, pulling the individual's soul towards this mundane world rather than allowing it to go higher to reach for the sky of spiritual achievement.]

Some of the inherent faults, shortcomings, imperfections and drawbacks that mire the creature's spiritual progress and pull him down from reaching the high of spiritual achievement that would make him equivalent to the supreme Soul of creation are the following—Kaam (worldly desires, lust, passions etc. and the attending greed, yearnings and aspirations that they create in their wake), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness and a sense of vengeance when desired results are not obtained and aspirations are not fulfilled), Bhaye (fear, consternation and perplexities arising out of uncertainties,

confusions and other factors such as fear from death and enemy, fear of failure and its attending shame, fear of sufferings of the body due to old age and diseases etc.), Moha (delusions that create a sense of attachment, infatuation and belonging to this material world and attractions for the illusive charms that its sense objects offer, along with their sensual pleasures and comforts), Lobha (greed, rapacity and yearnings), Mada (arrogance, false pride, hypocrisy and haughtiness), Raja (the quality of remaining engrossed in this world of material objects, to think that one is the doer of deeds and therefore is entitled to the rewards of these deeds etc.), the problems associated with the cycle of Janma and Mrityu (birth and death), Kaarpanya or Kripantaa (to be miserly and pinch-fisted, shallow-hearted and small-minded, frugal, illiberal, niggardly, avaricious, stingy), Shok (grief, sorrows, miseries and agonies of all kinds), Standra (sleepiness, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties), Kshudha (hunger) and Pipasa (thirst) [10],-----

-----Tirshnaa (thirst for acquiring and enjoying worldly things and desire for self gratification; greed, avarice and rapacity for the material world and its sense objects and their enjoyments), Lajja (shame at doing something dishonourable and ignominious) and its attendant fear of losing face, self respect, dignity and position in society, all sorts of Dukha and Vishaad (sorrows, miseries, agonies, grieving, lamentations, feeling of gloom and guilt, melancholy, sadness, depression, dejection, low-spirited etc.), and Harsh (the opposite of Dukha and Vishaad; the feeling of elation, happiness, joy, ecstasy and exhilaration; to feel glad, cheerful and joyous).

These are the shortcomings or imperfections that cast their shadow on the otherwise immaculate and perfect Atma of the creature, thereby miring it in a number of unwarranted problems and separating it from its pure nature. Until the creature is freed from their clutches or tainting effects, he cannot ever hope to become as pure as the Shiva, i.e. the creature cannot attain his true primary nature which is pristine pure, uncorrupt, truthful, auspicious, neutral and beautiful like the form of Shiva [11]. (10-11).

[Note—These two verses list 19 faults that mire the creature's Atma. Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 11-14.]

12. Therefore it is essential to get rid of these faults and destroy them. Now I shall tell you the ways to do so. Some say that only Gyan (knowledge) is the proper instrument to effect this riddance. But simply Gyan is not sufficient to do so; it cannot alone provide the mystical powers necessary to achieve success in self-realisation and understanding the pure nature of the pure conscious Atma (12).

[Note—Refer also to verse no. 48 of this Canto as well as to verse no. 14 of the Yogtattva Upanishad.]

13. Gyan devoid of Yoga is also equally incompetent to provide liberation and deliverance from the horrors of the above faults. Similarly, Yoga devoid of Gyan is also equally incompetent to do so. In other words, they have to go hand in hand if the spiritual aspirant is serious about obtaining success in his spiritual venture (13).

[Note—Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 14-15.]

14. Hence, those who are sincere about spiritual liberation and deliverance should painstakingly practice both Yoga and Gyan with equal steadfastness and diligence. [This

is because if Gyan can enlighten a person about the Truth, follow up action in the way of practicing what has been learnt from the reading of the scriptures is equally important. Simple knowledge is as useless as mere blind pursuance of any line of action. The word 'Yoga' means to bring about a union or fusion of two entities. Hence, if Gyan can enlighten a man about the Truth and Reality of existence from the metaphysical perspective, Yoga would help him to actually reach this Truth and Reality by making diligent and synchronized efforts and maintaining a steady progress on this path. What good is any knowledge if it is not actually practices, and how can one practice if one does not know the correct way and the detailed method to be followed?]

The importance of Gyan in attaining Brahm cannot be underestimated or undermined. The reason is as follows—The attainment of the supreme transcendental Truth known as Brahm as well as the reality about one's own 'true self' as the pure conscious Atma is only possible by following the correct path and having the correct knowledge as to what they really mean and actually constitute of. This is known by the medium of Gyan and no other means. Therefore in a sense and metaphorically, Gyan and Brahm are synonymous with each other. If one has true spiritual knowledge or Gyan it is implied that he knows about Brahm and is a self-realised person. Others who pretend to have Gyan and do not have this knowledge are mere fraudulent pretenders and cunning imposters.

The way to such an eclectic and divine holy entity known as Brahm and the Atma is by the path of Gyan. It is holy path that is knowledge-based. [One cannot hope to reach one's goal by following a wrong path that is not compatible to one's aim. For example, one cannot hope to become a medical doctor by studying engineering. So if one wishes to become aware of Brahm, one has to follow the correct path that leads to it, and that path is acquisition of correct knowledge of what or who Brahm is. For, if one does not have the basic knowledge, erudition and wisdom, neither would he know what to do and how to reach his goal, nor would he recognise the symptoms of his progress in the correct direction, and whether or not he has actually obtained success when he has reached his spiritual goal of Brahm-realisation and self-realisation.]

Hence, primarily Gyan is the basic path or means to Brahm. It is Gyan which enlightens the spiritual aspirant as to what or who Brahm is, what methods are available to reach this divine spiritual goal of life, which option is the most suitable for the individual, what are the benefits of following this path and what rewards await him on attaining or reaching his spiritual destination known as Brahm (14).

[Note—Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 14-15.]

15. A person desirous of Moksha (spiritual liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation) should first understand what is 'Agyan' (ignorance and lack of correct knowledge of the reality and truth; the reverse of Gyan). Once one knows what constitutes Agyan, then the latter no longer remains Agyan; it becomes a sort of Gyan (knowledge)¹.

When the ignorance about one's true self and its nature are removed, one becomes aware of the pure and supreme nature of the 'self' and its most exalted and eclectic stature. It is such a unique entity that it has no match and parallel, hence it is incomparable and unmatched. Therefore it is called 'Kaivalya Param Pada', i.e. the only state of existence of the 'true self' that is the best and supreme in nature, and is

consequentially free from the various faults that have been enumerated above (in verse no. 10-11). This is true spiritual 'Gyan'² (15).

[Note—¹When one becomes aware of anything, he does not come within the ambit of the word 'ignorant'. So when a spiritual aspirant becomes aware of the fact that he lacks certain knowledge, then he cannot be described as a completely ignorant man—for he is aware of the limitations, shortcomings or imperfections. If he is a wise man, he would now endeavour to remove them. But the first step towards this endeavour is his knowledge that he has these limitations, shortcomings and imperfections. Therefore, in the primary stage he might be 'ignorant' of the path and the goal and hence labeled as an 'Agyani' or an ignorant man who is not aware of this path and the goal, but technically he is not an Agyani; he indeed 'has knowledge' of his shortcomings and limitations. This would make him feel humble and eager to overcome his lack of knowledge. In a similar vein, suppose a man has an expert knowledge of everything but he is full of pride, ego and an exaggerated sense of self-importance and vanity which makes him arrogant and haughty of his erudition, skills, wisdom and sagacity, then he is worse off than a totally ignorant man. In fact, such a man comes within the definition of being an Agyani—an ignorant man.

If one is not aware of one's goal, he would not even attempt to reach it. This is the height of ignorance. When one becomes aware that one is unaware of this knowledge of one's goal, then this marks the first step towards knowledge, for then one would strive to find out what the goal is. The next step would be to find out the path or the way to reach that goal. This is where the role of Gyan comes in—to enlighten one about his true spiritual goal in life and how to reach it. But merely knowledge wouldn't take one to the goal, for action is needed. This is where Yoga comes into play. The exercises of Yoga and the contemplation and meditation that it incorporates in its ambit are the tools in this spiritual pursuit. Yoga means 'union', hence it brings about a union between the traveler and the destination; it establishes a link between the spiritual aspirant and his goal of spiritual enlightenment and self-realisation leading to Moksha which is liberation and deliverance of the soul from the endless cycle of birth and death and its attendant horrors, and its final emancipation and salvation. This is the main function of Yoga in the spiritual sphere.

If the Gyan (knowledge) is imperfect, for example if the man chooses the wrong destination or boards the wrong train, the entire exercise proves a nuisance for him; he was better off being ignorant because in both the case he never finds his real goal. He was better off being totally ignorant because he was at peace with himself as the subconscious wasn't nagging him as he was unaware of his lack of knowledge and therefore could be excused due to his innocence. But once he becomes aware of his shortcomings, he must make efforts to remove them for after becoming aware he cannot be excused of his shortcomings on the ground of being innocence. Now, if he follows the wrong path and incompetent advice, it is obvious that he is wasting his time, energy and efforts in vain. This is where Gyan plays a crucial role—it would show him the correct path, the correct way to follow this path, advise him to avoid the pitfalls, the symptoms of progress and success. This is where proper guidance of the scriptures and their correct and judicious interpretation comes in handy. Since there may be a number of trains to the designated destination and one must choose the most suitable one, this is like selecting the most apt path to reach one's spiritual goal.

Further, knowledge of one's destination enables one to recognise it when it is reached. So the knowledge of what or who is Brahm is as important as being aware of its existence. But there are degrees of knowledge—one of the best standards of knowledge would enlighten the spiritual aspirant that that Brahm whom he has embarked upon to attain is not somewhere in far distant corner of the universe which is beyond his reach,

resulting in him feeling frustrated, dismayed and disheartened at its inaccessibility. For true and high standard of Gyan would tell him that Brahm resides in his own inner self as his pure conscious Atma residing in his subtle heart. So he has just to turn inwards to see and witness Brahm and experience the latter's divine and holy presence.

Thus, Yoga has brought about a meeting place for the ignorant Jiva, i.e. the living being, the worldly creature, and Gyan, i.e. the wise intellect and mind that enables the treasure of knowledge to be unfolded before the creature to remove his darkness of ignorance and its attendant delusions that had been miring him for so long. Yoga helps to forge a relationship between them, leading the creature by the hand on his spiritual journey of discovery.

'You know that you know nothing. Find out that knowledge. This is Mukti (liberation and deliverance from ignorance)'—Ramanna Maharishi.

'I am better off than he (a man reputed for wisdom) is, for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows. I neither know nor think that I know—the truth is, O men of Athens, that God only is wise'—Plato.

'The Yogi (ascetic) whose intellect is perfect contemplates all things abiding in himself and thus, by the eyes of knowledge, he perceives that everything is Atma'—Adi Shankaracharya.

'He who knows and knows he knows, he is a wise man—seek him. He who knows and knows not that he knows, is asleep—wake him. He who know not and knows that he knows not, he is like a child—teach him. He who knows not and knows not that he knows not—he is stupid and ignorant, shun him'.

'There are things which are 'known knowns', i.e. we know about them; we know we know about them. Then there are things that are 'known unknowns', i.e. we do not know anything about them; there are some things we do not know about. Then there are 'unknown unknowns', i.e. things which are very uncertain and about which we do not know anything; we are ignorant even about their existence'.

Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 16-18.

²The Kaivalya Param Pada is the ultimate destination for a spiritual aspirant and a seeker of emancipation and salvation. The phrase consists of three words, viz. 'Kaivalya' meaning the only one of its kind, 'Param' meaning the supreme and transcendental, and 'Pada' meaning stature, designation, destination and state of existence. It is the culmination of all spiritual exercises such as Yoga and acquisition of knowledge called Gyan. It is 'self-realisation' or enlightenment about the true nature of the pure conscious Atma, and 'Brahm-realisation' or the eclectic truth about the supreme transcendental Brahm which is the eternal cosmic Consciousness from which the entire creation or existence has come into being. Besides having this Gyan (knowledge), the aspirant must also practice Yoga as an essential tool to bring about unification between the Atma and Brahm which alone would give him true emancipation and salvation because then he would not have to take a birth again. This is the combined purpose of Gyan and Yoga.]

16. The pure conscious Atma which is the truthful identity of the Jiva (the living being, the creature) is primarily ethereal, pure, untainted and uncorrupt in nature (as opposed to the physical body in which this Atma resides, for the body is impure and corrupt). But this same Atma, under delusions caused by ignorance of its truthful identity and immaculate nature, begins to call itself a Jiva, i.e. a living being or creature which has an external physical gross body that is inherently subjected to numerous faults that are associated with this mortal and material world which is illusory but appears to be very real.

Consequentially, the Atma begins to identify itself as a 'Jiva' that is surrounded by all the faults inherent and natural to this physical gross world marked by imperfections and taints. In other words, being in the wrong company and having a wrong identity, the Atma is now called a 'Jiva' surrounded by such faults as Kaam (worldly passions, lust and yearnings), Krodh (anger, indignation), Bhaye (fears of all sorts) etc. (16).

[Note—Refer verse nos. 5-6 of this Canto 1. Refer also to Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 12-13; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/1-93/15.]

17. Since everything in existence is a manifestation of the same universal Atma which is revealed as the true 'self' of the Jiva, the living being, at the micro level, and as the ubiquitous all-pervading cosmic Soul, called the Parmatma, at the macro level, it follows that Gyan (all forms of knowledge, erudition and wisdom) is also a manifestation of the Atma¹. This Gyan is therefore wholesome and all-encompassing like its parent body the Atma.

Similarly and for the same reason, even negative traits such as Kaam (worldly passion, lust and desires) and Krodh (anger, indignation, spitefulness and wrath) are also a part of the same 'self' as nothing exists that is not the 'self' in the form of the Atma² (17).

[Note—¹This is because verse no. 14 has already established that Gyan and Brahm are synonymous with each other. And it is a universally established principle of the Upanishads that Atma and Brahm are the same, they are 'non-dual'.

²This is because the entire creation is a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm whose micro level form is the Atma of the individual who is one unit of the complex structure of the mosaic that forms this vast existence. Since everything in existence must live within the boundary of existence as nothing exists outside of it, it follows that the good and the bad both must exist side by side in this creation as manifestations of the Sata and Tama Gunas respectively. Again since everything in existence is a manifestation of Brahm, it follows that the good and the bad are also included in this wide definition. Therefore, the negative traits mentioned in this verse and in earlier verse no. 10-11 must co-exist with the positive traits as manifestations of Brahm.]

18. Wholesome Gyan (wisdom and enlightenment) is that stage when one rises above narrow-minded considerations regarding what is acceptable and what is not. In this stage, he becomes full of equanimity and grace, treating everything alike and with the same degree of tolerance and broad-heartedness. That is, as long as the distinction of one thing being good and the other being bad is there, or till the time the person thinks that this thing is mine and that is yours, or the very notion of 'this and that' and 'me or mine and you or yours' is there, true enlightenment has not been achieved. When all artificial distinctions and differences are erased, when complete equanimity and uniformity of vision is attained, when the eclectic state of non-duality is obtained, when a high degree of neutrality, non-involvement, non-partisan attitude and detachment become a norm rather than an exception, it is then said that one has obtained 'true Gyan', he has reached its pinnacle, he has understood the real purpose and intent of pursuing Gyan. This happens because true Gyan teaches one to be wise enough to be able to peer behind the exteriors and look at the reality behind it as the external façade might be misleading. The external world which is said to 'living' essentially consists of 'non-living' ingredients. For instance, the body of the creature consists of bones, flesh, blood, mucous, urine,

stool, veins and capillaries, skin etc.—none of which have inherent factor of life in them. So surely there must be some factor that infuses ‘life and consciousness’ in such inane and lifeless entities. This vital factor is known as the Atma which is uniform and universal. It is the same Atma which injects life in one body as it does in the other body and the next. The bodies may vary but the Atma is ubiquitously the same. A person who understands this basic concept of existence is said to have acquired spiritual knowledge called Gyan.

Such a wise, erudite and highly enlightened man is eternally freed from all the fetters that shackle a creature to this artificial world of delusions and ignorance; he is deemed to have obtained Mukti or liberation and deliverance from all its traps (18).

19. Oh the one emerging from the divine Lotus (i.e. Brahma)! This state of eclectic realisation (when all distinctions and sense of duality are removed or erased) is true enlightenment (Gyan), and it marks the state when the Jiva (creature) has understood his universal, true and wholesome ‘self’.

This is the ultimate truth about the ‘true’ nature of the creature. When he attains this exalted state of enlightenment, all his imperfections and worldly faults are got rid of, and he is deemed to be fulfilled and complete (19).

20. The ‘Kali’¹ is very unsteady, ever changing and fickle. When the creature comes in contact with it and begins to interact with it, it is bound to be influenced by the latter. Hence, the creature becomes veiled in all the doubts and confusions that are so characteristic of Kali in spite of the fact that the primary nature of the creature is to be free from all such negative traits as he is a personification of Brahm² who is ‘Nishkal’, i.e. is without any taints, faults, shortcomings and imperfections, who is ‘Nirmal’, i.e. is pure, uncorrupt and immaculate, and who is like the ‘Gagan’³, i.e. is like the sky element in its virtues of non-attachment and non-involvement in spite of being pregnant with so many impurities¹, its vastness, eternity and infinity (20).

[Note—¹The word *Kali* literally means some entity that is dark and foreboding, something that is tainted and tarnished, a character or quality that is marked by negativity such as delusions and ignorance that are the hallmarks of this artificial material world. In the present context, the word refers to the existing world called the Kali Yug which is the fourth era of the 4-era Hindu celestial cycle of birth and death. This era called Kali Yug is dominated by negative qualities called Tama Guna—which is a metaphor for darkness and ignorance causing delusions and creating phantoms. It causes spiritual degradation and general denigration of the creature. Since the living being called the ‘Jiva’ has to live in this environment, it is influenced by its inherent traits as enumerated in this verse.

²The virtues of Nishkal, Nirmal etc. have been described above in verse no. 5 of this Canto 1.

³The sky is full of so many things such as planets, stars, sun and the moon, asteroids and cosmic debris as well as with dust, gases and a horde of other forms of impurities. But the sky always remains non-attached with them. It is proved by the fact that we see a cloud sky one moment, and a few hours later the sky becomes absolutely clear.

The sky or space is the subtlest of the five elements—viz. earth, water, fire, wind/air, space/sky. It pervades everywhere but is uncorrupt, unpolluted and faultless in all respects. The blemishes, faults, vices, evils, sins, corruptions, misdemeanors and all sorts of digressions present in the world are like suspended dust particles, smoke, moisture, clouds, the numerous other things such as the various birds and the celestial bodies high

up in the sky which create an illusion of a sky that is spotted or dotted or polluted or coloured or overcast with these uncountable objects that are extraneous to the sky, that are not integral to it but nevertheless appear to be a part of the sky. The sky has nothing to do with them; it remains absolutely unconcerned with and untainted by them, for once they are removed from the scene the sky is uniform and spotless from one end of the horizon to the other. This example is very practical and can be observed by anyone. That is why 'sky' is used as a metaphor to describe anything that remains free from the influences of those things that appear to be an integral part of it but are in actual fact not related with it by even any remote chance.

The sky has the opposite types of characteristics present in it. For example, the space of the vast cosmos has no form but the space inside a bottle or a pot takes the shape of the bottle or the pot respectively. Similarly, the vast sky in its basic and truthful form is spotless and without any colours, but it appears to be spotted with so many stars and specs of clouds and smoke of different colours as well as with birds of different forms, colours and shapes flying here and there. The colour of the sky during the evening or morning hours present a canvas of so many colours which appear to be real, but they are obviously a reflection of the colours of the light of the sun as reflected from the various impurities present in the otherwise spotless sky.

This is what is meant here—though the Atma or Brahm are inherently and basically pristine pure and clean, but when they come in contact with this world, the different flaws and faults of the latter cast their shadow and make them appear to have some or the other kind of spots in them.

The sky has such grand and majestic attributes as being vast, measureless, uniform, immutable, spotless, clean, colourless, calm, all-pervading, all-encompassing etc. The sky is the measurement of Brahm in the sense that if it was ever possible to measure the length, breadth and depth of the sky, it would then have been possible to measure Brahm. But that is not at all the case. The calmness of the higher reaches of the sky is experienced by Para gliders and can even be witnessed on top of mountains which are high above the ground and located somewhere in the space around the earth, symbolised by the sky, where there is an eerie silence. The sky has no colours of its own; whatever colours that we see are actually the scattered sunlight.

Everything that exists does so in any one of these spaces. Every nook and corner where there is no solid or liquid is filled with space or 'Akash', which is a synonym of sky. It is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing. That is, these three forms of the skies, viz. the outer, the inner and that which is present inside the heart, are all the same; there is no distinction or demarcation or boundary or fundamental difference between any two skies. The apparent boundary or limitation imposed on the sky by the physical body or the membrane of the heart is only deceptive in nature. Once a person dies, for example, his body perishes, and the space present inside the heart merges indistinguishably with the space present inside the body when the body is cremated or decays when buried, and they together merge with the vast space present outside the body.

The 'sky', which was originally conceived as something that was 'void' or 'nothing', gets filled with 'air', simply because void can't exist, and the creation which came into being in this void needed some base for its origin and coming into being. The molecules or atoms of air are in a state of continuous agitation and flux; they collide with each other, they form a chain of molecules which give rise to different layers or strata of air which extend from the surface of this earth to the stratosphere. This continuous turmoil produces 'sound'. Various physical and chemical processes come into play, producing gases of varying density and characteristic features. Air has particles of dust and different gases, which produce the perception of touch. Friction of the various molecules present in

the air produces static electricity which is observed as a scintillating display of atmospheric discharge of electrically charged particles in the sky often observed at the poles. This sparkle of static electric discharge is synonymous with 'fire'. Perhaps the Upanishadic sage got this brilliant idea when he observed a meteor shower during the night. The two elementary gases hydrogen and oxygen combine to form the molecule H_2O commonly known as 'water'. With all these essential ingredients in place, the solidifying and cooling down process of nature starts its effect and produces soil and rocks which are symbolised by the 'earth' element. Then gravity and magnetic forces come into play, giving density, gravity and grossness, indicative of the grossness or heaviness of not only the earth but also of the air around it. Previously, before gravity and other forces of nature came into play, this air was subtle and very light; it spread universally and uniformly to all the corners of the cosmos. But with the gradual formation of different celestial bodies from the primordial cosmic gases, each having its own gravity and other natural physical and chemical forces, the air was pulled or sucked in, leaving the rest of the space beyond the reach of these celestial bodies into a big void. The sky is pregnant with a wide variety of impurities. It is full of celestial bodies besides cosmic debris. It has the burning furnace of the sun as well as the cool pitcher of nectar symbolised by the moon. The black clouds of a storm with its stabs of ferocious lightening coexist with white fluffy clouds floating lazily across the calm sky. There are birds of prey and there are harmless kites flying in it. There is the polluted haze of the city as is the pristine clear atmosphere of a village and the mountain. There is the brightness of the day and the foreboding darkness of the night. But the wonder is that none of these really affect the sky at all—it remains clear and untainted in its basic nature and form. All these things cited here are extraneous to the fundamental nature and characteristic of the sky. The sky treats all of them with the same magnanimity and kindness. Similarly, a wise man treats all the creatures with whom he has to interact in this world with the same equanimity and fortitude as the sky.]

21. When the supreme transcendental Consciousness abandons its state of being all-knowing and omniscient, it gets trapped in the web of ignorance and delusions. As a consequence, it forgets its eternal, imperishable and infinite nature and thinks in terms of having a birth or origin, having an existence, and then coming to an end. It oscillates between these states of existence and never finds peace; it swirls, wobbles, tumbles and tosses about in the ocean represented by this cycle.

But why has it come to this sorry state of affairs? [This is because the consciousness or the pure 'self' of the creature thinks that it has a body and lives in the world, that the world is its home, that it does the various deeds and therefore must either enjoy their rewards or suffer from their consequences, and being identified with the body necessarily means that it would be subjected to all the incumbent problems that are so typical with the body. In short, it loses its pristine pure, neutral, eclectic and divine form and instead gets mired in all the shortcomings, flaws, imperfections or faults associated with and characteristic of the world.] (21).

22. Oh Mahabaho (the great, able-armed and exalted Brahma)! Being shorn of Gyan, this consciousness or Atma is subjected to the toss and flip caused by such opposing and contradictory emotions as feeling miserable, sorrowful, tormented and agonized on the one hand, and feeling happy, joyous, elated and ecstatic on the other on the other hand. The Atma gets torn between them. It is engulfed in and mired by uncountable delusions and their accompanying perplexities and confusions. Consequentially it begins to behave

like an ordinary mortal creature that is rapacious and lustful about this world of sense objects and yearns for self gratification. This is the way it lives in this world, remaining perpetually restless and agitated in the turmoil created by this delusory world of artificiality and ever-changing illusions (22).

23. Therefore, if a man regards himself learned and wise but remains engrossed and submerged in pursuing this material world, if he has not been able to overcome his worldly desires and lust for its sense objects and their attendant pleasures and comforts, then he is no better off than a person who is openly ignorant and deluded. He is deemed to be a worldly man who is shackled to it rather than a liberated soul free from its fetters (23).

24. If one remains like an ordinary ignorant man who is unaware of the delusory and trapping nature of this artificial material world, the world which is an ocean of problems and unhappiness, then say what is the use of his acquiring Gyan (by studying the scriptures and attending religious discourses for instance)?

Only those who have resolutely inculcated in themselves the glorious and eclectic virtues of detachment, dispassion and renunciation, who are honest, steadfast and diligent in following the righteous, auspicious and noble path called the path of Dharma in their daily lives, and who have been able to control their sense organs in a comprehensive manner—only such people are able to have a firm foothold in the field of Gyan¹ (24).

[Note--¹This is because the charms of the world would not be able to sway a wise and enlightened man from his chosen spiritually exalted path of righteousness, auspiciousness, truthfulness, honesty, selflessness as well as exemplary nobility of thought and conduct. His life would be exemplary, it would be like a beacon for others, and in spite of having to live like an ordinary creature in this world, his true 'self' never allows him to get entangled in the world. A wise man cannot avoid the world for the simple reason that the Atma resides in the physical body during its sojourn in this material world due to its past ignorance of its true nature, but such a man would not repeat his previous mistakes by getting engrossed or entangled in this world of artificiality ever again. Instead, he would treat this body as a God-sent opportunity to strive hard to reach his goal of finding a way out of this quagmire, and find liberation and final deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death and their attendant miseries. Once he makes this decision, he has crossed one important milestone in reaching the state of enlightenment. The rest follows as a natural progression if he is steady and resolute in his decision. Herein comes the role of self control and renunciation—because it is very hard and difficult to overcome natural urges of the senses which resist being controlled and which have an innate tendency to move towards their objects in this material world. The world is also difficult to rebuff because it pretends to be one's most precious possession, and of course its charms and pleasures are too enticing, convincing, strong and robust to resist.]

25. Oh Vidhe (Brahma, the creator who formed the codes of conduct for his creation, and hence the name 'Vidhe'—the formulator and giver of laws)! The creature cannot find Moksha, i.e. he cannot hope to obtain liberation from this gross physical body in which the Atma is trapped, without the aid of Yoga (meaning physical exercises, actions and efforts in this direction).

Creatures with physical gross bodies are of two types—‘Paripakwa’ or those who are mature in wisdom and have the proper aptitude and mental preparedness for Yoga, and ‘Aparipakwa’ or those who are immature and do not have the correct aptitude and inclination to follow the tenets of Yoga (25).

26. Those who do not follow the path of Yoga are called ‘Aparipakwa’, while those who have Yoga as their chosen path are called ‘Paripakwa’¹.

The fire of Yoga makes the gross body subtler and lighter; it makes it cleaner and purer by removing its grossness, impurities, imperfections and other faults. The fire of Yoga helps to remove all sorts of problems associated with the body that torment the creature constantly² (26).

[Note—¹The ignorant people do not even know what Yoga is, and they do not bother about it because they do not wish to let their pampered body to suffer a bit. They would rather enjoy the comforts and pleasures of this material world and remain engrossed in seeking gratification for their sense organs. Their ignorance prevents them from even attempting to look beyond the body and its comforts—for them the world and the body is all there is to it in this world. They have no idea that there is something called the pure consciousness or Atma which is trapped in the body and from which entrapment it longs to break free. So who bothers, they think! Such people fall under the category of ‘Aparipakwa’. The concept of the Atma is too abstract for them to comprehend and grasp vis-à-vis the physical world and the gross body both of which are physically tangible and verifiable quickly; the presence of the body and the world can be witnessed first hand in material terms as compared to the presence of the Atma which requires a specially tuned mind-intellect and a high level of wisdom and enlightenment to be acquainted with. Therefore for ordinary persons it becomes a difficult exercise to neglect what is evident in the face of it, viz. the body and the world, and believe in the existence of something that is difficult to ascertain in physical terms.

Compared to them, there are wise and enlightened people who have realised who they actually are, that the main spiritual goal is not the pursuance of the material world and gratifying of the sense organs but to break free from this jail and let the Atma fly off to freedom from its encasement, from its bondage. How does the chick break free from the hardened shell of the egg? This example is before them. The chick has to make a diligent effort to break free from the hardened shell of the egg, for the egg’s shell would not break out of its own free will to allow the chick to walk out to freedom. The same thing happens here—in order to break free from the fetters of the body, the wise ascetic has to make efforts, and the ‘effort’ made is the following of the various codes of conduct, the different exercises and obeying of the pristine philosophy of Yoga. The codes of conduct help them to regulate their body and life, the exercises tone-up their bodies and prepares them physically by harnessing sufficient energy to enable their Atma or soul or pure consciousness to launch itself on to its onwards journey towards eternal liberation, and the philosophy prepares them mentally and intellectually. To obtain final deliverance, all the three legs or steps are necessary, for otherwise there are good chances of falling back or slipping even after the first few steps have been successfully taken to obtain freedom. It is just like the case when the rocket that is to be sent to distance planets must be provided sufficient energy and thrust so as to break free from the gravitational pull of the earth and go onwards on its outward journey; otherwise it would fall back on the earth even before reaching its outer atmosphere.

²This is just like warming cold water or food to kill its bacteria and making them lighter and agreeable for the body. It is observed that as the water is warmed, the heated part of the water rises to the surface and the colder part sinks to the bottom of the vessel.

In the cases of gases, heating makes them lighter and subtler so that they rise up. Extending this analogy to the body of the creature, practice of Yoga generates heat which not only cleans up the body of all trapped toxins by ejecting them out from their age-old niches in the body and eliminating them through the breath, sweat, mucous, urine and stool, but also activates the dormant energy reserves in the body by unclogging the various nerves and veins and other such ducts of the body, thereby making the practitioner of Yoga more healthier and disease free. A healthy body is not only happy and comfortable for the creature but it also allows him to pursue his goal more vigorously and diligently because the mind would not be engaged in various problems associated with a diseased body and would have the time, energy and freedom to pursue its objectives with greater tenacity, vigour, energy and concentration.

Yoga Upanishads detail how Yoga helps the practitioner to easily conquer the various hurdles created by the body, they list the numerous benefits of practicing Yoga, and how liberation and deliverance of the soul is possible through it.]

27. The physical body made up of the gross organs of action and different perceptions is called 'gross and mortal' (because it is subjected to all the grossness, faults, impurities, imperfections and shortcomings associated with the 'earth' and other grosser elements, including their natural propensity for decay and destruction). [In the absence of Yoga, it is this body that torments the creature no end.]

With the body's constant nagging and persistent gnawing, other mediums of obtaining liberation and deliverance such as Dhyān (contemplation and meditation upon the divine and holy deity) and other such means also become impractical. This is obviously because the mind and intellect are too pre-occupied by the various agonies and miseries that exert their push and pull on the gross body and its organs to find sufficient time and energy for more subtle and sublime issues. [For example, when one has a severe headache, it is impossible for him to concentrate on his studies. Or the case when one is hungry and thirsty, then his entire attention is diverted towards eating and drinking and not towards doing meditation or even any other physical activity such as doing household chores or running errands. The basic idea of Yoga is to clean the body internally, to overhaul it in order to optimize its functioning in a proper way without creating unwarranted problems for the creature. When the body is at ease and feels rested and rejuvenated, the mind-intellect would automatically be freed to divert its energy and attention to higher goals of life. Otherwise, the mind-intellect would be so entangled in and overwhelmed by the numerous demands of the body and meeting them that it would be exhausted of its energy and completely worn out.] (27).

28. It so happens sometimes that even if one is able to exercise self control over the organs of perception and action he still continues to suffer from heat and cold and other such external factors that are beyond his control on the one hand, and on the other hand from such emotional factors as sorrows and miseries or joys and happiness which together never allow his mind to rest and find peace, serenity and tranquility.

These are the hindrances which are like the different ailments that afflict both the body and the mind, and they constantly continue to bother the spiritual aspirant or the ascetic (28).

29. The mind and body of a man are constantly being tormented by numerous other factors of this world, such as the various problems created by other creatures, various

implements that are used to threaten and inflict injuries upon him, as well as the problems created by the elements such as fire, water and wind¹ etc. (29).

[Note—¹The ‘fire’ has to be constantly guarded against, for a little carelessness would be devastating. Similarly, ‘water’, though an essential element of life, causes floods on the one hand and its lack causes draughts on the other hand, keeping a man constantly worried about it and on his toes. ‘Wind’ in the form of severe storms uproots huts, trees etc., damage crops and cause widespread havoc; on the high seas it can upturn boats and affect maritime trade and commerce. In short, the man is kept on his tenterhooks because of these factors which are boons for his existence on the one hand, and his tormentors on the other.]

30. Finally, due to some reason, the time comes for a man to die. At this time also he is not left in peace, because death is associated with horrors unimaginable for him—his Pran (i.e. his life forces represented by the vital winds or airs) become agitated and restless, making the dying man extremely restless, agitated, anguished and tormented. His agonies and sufferings of life are compounded, and he begins to worry more and more as death approaches. [He recounts his past life of enjoyments and pleasures, he worries about his unfinished tasks and his family and assets, he thinks about the bleak and dark future and the yawning mouth of death staring on his face. How can anyone in this situation hope to find rest and peace? The prospects of death and its attendant horrors are too overwhelming for any man. They send shivers down his spine and leave him cold and dry so much so that if given a chance he would bargain anything or everything he has just to avoid death. Herein lie the beauty of the philosophy of life as expounded by the Upanishads which stress that the body that is suffering and is about to die is not the ‘true self’ of the man; this ‘self’ is the pure consciousness called the Atma which is eternal and imperishable, and hence beyond the reach of death. Therefore, ‘death’ occurs to the gross body and not to the Atma.] (30).

31. At the time of death, whatever the creature thinks and has in his mind, he takes a new birth accordingly. The memories and thoughts of the last moment of the present life are the base and cause for the new and next birth (31).

[Note—The eternal question ‘how does the Atma get entangled into the cycle of birth and death’ has been answered in Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 5/10-12 of Krishna Yajur Veda.]

32. What would happen after death, which new life would one get, where would he be born¹—no one can know it for certain. Then it appears that pursuing Gyan (making efforts to acquire knowledge and becoming enlightened) and Vairagya (renunciation and detachment from all worldly things and attachment with them) is a fruitless exercise; all efforts made in this direction is a waste of time and energy² (32).

[Note—¹These questions have been answered in a number of Upanishads—e.g. Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 4/3/36, 4/4/1, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2, 14-16, etc.; Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1; Taittiriyo-pahishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20; Canto 1, Valli 2, verse no. 1-6; Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 6-8; Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no. 4-17; Subalo-panishad, Canto 11. What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1. The *three great Truths* to be remembered at the time of *death* have enunciated in Chandogya Upanishad, 3/17/6. They are—(1) You are eternal and imperishable; (2) You cannot be demoted, degenerate,

become fallen and digressed; and (3) You are basically most sublime, subtle, atomic and a microcosmic image of the vast and macrocosmic supreme Brahman. The metaphor of the *tree* has been brilliantly employed to explain 'what happens after' death in Brihad Aranyak 3/9/28, and in Chandogya 6/11/1-3.

²Such questions are asked by skeptics and doubting Thomases who do not bother to think long term; they do not take the effort to peer behind the curtain to find the truth concealed behind it. They call themselves rationalists, secular and modern in outlook. They are ignorant of subtle things of existence which defy physical laws of material science and are beyond definitions based on them. This is because the mind-intellect of such people is dominated by the deluding effects of the gross material world and its physical dimension so much so that it cannot be tuned to hear the call of the transcendental and sublime. Their 'radio set' would just not catch these frequencies!]

33. If an ant bites anyone, he becomes extremely agitated and his concentration on the work he was engaged in is affected. Then say how he can remain calm, poised, unruffled and undeterred when a scorpion bites him, for the torments of death are no less horrendous and painful than a scorpion bite (33).

34. Thus, that entity which is enigmatic, mystical and esoteric as well as transcendental in nature, which is beyond the grasp of comprehension and senses (such as the Atma is), cannot be understood by those people who are skeptical, argumentative and pre-maturely judgmental in their attitude. It cannot be grasped by those who try to understand it by physical laws and application of worldly logic. Such people rely more on the strength of their intelligence and rational mind to understand things and unravel esoteric secrets. But they forget that everything cannot be physically verified and understood; there are certain things which need a different set of mental qualities other than mere application of logic and intelligence to be understood; there are certain sublime and subtle aspects of this creation which are too complicated, too transcendental to be within the reach of the intelligent mind. There are certain things that can only be experienced and witnessed, and cannot be explained by logic and material proofs.

The way to this eclectic spiritual knowledge is different. The first step in this direction is the trouncing of 'Ahankar' (the sense of ego, pride and haughtiness about one's intellectual and physical prowess and strength; the pride that one has about his body and his intellect). That is, one must overcome the sense of pride in one's intellectual ability and mental prowess to know and ascertain something that is basically extremely mystical, esoteric, sublime, subtle and transcendental, something that is beyond the purview of worldly logic, arguments, proofs, rationality, debates and other laws of material science that are applicable to all material things of this physical world. There are certain things that cannot be determined by even the mind and intellect which are themselves subtle as compared to the body and its other organs which are gross in nature. When an ordinary man is not even able to see his own mind no matter how hard he tries, how can he expect to see something that is even subtler than the mind and extremely sublime? But does the fact that he is not able to see the mind mean that the latter does not exist—the answer is obviously 'no'. Therefore, the supreme transcendental Brahman whom he is not able to perceive, the Brahman that is beyond his conception and imagination, does indeed also exist inspite of his not being able to fathom and understand the latter (34).

35. The concept of Ahankar (i.e. ego, pride, vanity, exaggerated sense of self-importance) is very closely related to the gross body of the creature. So it is very essential to overcome Ahankar if one is to really make any tangible progress in one's spiritual journey because it acts more like a cumbersome millstone around one's neck, not only hindering his spiritual progress but actually dragging him down in the opposite direction. When Ahankar is destroyed, the gross body is also deemed to have lost its importance. When Ahankar is eliminated, the dependence upon the powers and abilities of the body is also eliminated, thereby removing the importance of the body from the scene altogether. When the body is removed from interfering in one's spiritual pursuit, then all the ailments and problems associated with the body (and outlined in verse nos. 27-33) are also done away with¹.

The pure conscious Atma, which is the true identity of the man (or for that matter of all living beings) and which is the one implied when we talk about him, is not at all affected by any of the ailments that afflict the body².

When the body is removed from the scene for all practical purposes, then how can weapons, fire, water and wind ever hope to interfere in one's spiritual progress and disturb one's internal peace and calmness of demeanours? They simply cannot! (35).

[Note—¹A man is very proud of his body and its abilities. He thinks that his body can and has achieved great things and successes in life; the body can do astoundingly difficult tasks and achieve stupendous success. He is proud of his body both at the gross level as well as the subtle level. At the gross level he is proud of the body's physical strength, stamina, powers, virility and beauty, and at the subtle level he is proud of the magnificent and most majestic powers of the mind and the intellect. He believes that he is superior to other creatures of this creation because of this body and its mighty powers. His sense of over-confidence on the abilities of the body extend to the realm of spiritualism because he believes he can rival the supreme Lord of creation known as Brahm and lord over the world because the scriptures themselves say that he is a manifestation of Brahm. He believes that he can successfully do intense Yoga (meditation) involving rigid and difficult exercises by employing this body, thereby acquiring immense mystical powers that would invest him with the same authority and powers that are possessed by the Supreme Being. He believes that his true 'self' and identity is the body instead of the pure consciousness called the Atma or the inner self, and therefore feels proud in the achievements of the body. He believes that he can use the body and its faculties to reach the pinnacle of spiritual success and find emancipation and salvation from the torments and horrors of this world. In short, he has Ahankar in relation to the body. The question why the body cannot actually help him in his spiritual pursuit has already been answered in verse nos. 27-34 of the present Canto 1 above. This body is itself perishable and gross to the highest degree, so it cannot be instrumental in lifting one to a high pedestal of spiritualism; it is rather like a cumbersome millstone around one's neck, dragging him down and pulling him back instead of aiding his upliftment. So it is deduced that it is very essential to overcome Ahankar pertaining to the body if one is to really make any tangible progress in one's spiritual journey.

²In the previous case when Ahankar was not removed, the Atma had relied on the body and the mind to achieve its objective of finding liberation and deliverance by the path of Yoga and Gyan. But it had forgotten in the process that both these paths rely heavily on the prop of the body and the mind. The body and the mind themselves are a problem, so how can one entity that is a problem itself can remove other problems? So it becomes necessary to remove this primary hurdle that is the basic stumbling block for spiritual emancipation and salvation of the creature. How is it to be done? The answer is

provided in this verse—remove Ahankar. With the removal of Ahankar, the reliance on the body and mind ceases, and then the Atma, the true identity of the creature, the true ‘self’, realises its astounding potentials.

Here it is relevant to note that when Brahm decided to create this world, i.e. when he voluntarily allowed himself to get trapped in the web represented by this vast creation, the first element that came into being was ‘Ahankar’. It is then from this seed that the rest of the Gunas, Vasanas and Virittis emerged which would together mould the future creation and give each unit of it its unique character traits. The Gunas are the different character traits and virtues that are inherent to all living creatures, while the Vasanas and Virittis are the different passions, desires, temperaments, habits and tendencies natural to them.

Had there been no Ahankar, the chain reaction would not have started in the first place. This fact proves that all the problems faced by the Atma have their genesis in Ahankar. Refer verse no. 8 of the present Upanishad as well as to verse no. 10-11 of Yogttava Upanishad.]

36. Sometimes it happens that the subdued Ahankar begins to rear its head once again, it begins to stage a come back with a vengeance. In such cases all the benefits derived by Yoga and other spiritual pursuits are lost. All the previous horrors of the world and the body re-emerge. [Hence, one should be on the guard against resurgence of Ahankar.] (36).

37. There cannot be any event without a cause. Without Ahankar, there cannot be any agonies and miseries associated with the body (in the field of spiritualism). [It is a sense of pride and ego in one’s ability that one feels dismayed and distressed by failures. It is due to these negative traits that one does not acknowledge one’s limitations and shortcomings. Unless one realises that he has certain shortcomings, imperfections and faults, he would not make an attempt to remove them. If one thinks that he has studied all the scriptures and knows all that is to be known, then he is proud of his knowledge and intellectual prowess; he is so stupid that he forgets that mere letters of the scriptures would not give him spiritual liberation for he would be more concerned with showing off his intellectual abilities and acumen and getting recognised for them that he would never like to retire to seclusion and turn inwards to seek that ‘truth’ of which he has learnt from the scriptures and has gone to town boasting about, but had lost the real gem (i.e. the ‘truth’) in the process of being proud and haughty of his knowledge. He would like to be surrounded by knowledge seekers, by a crowd of disciples instead of spending quality time at being peace with his own self. This could also happen later on when, as a reward of Yoga, he acquires certain mystical powers called the various Siddhis. Then he would become proud of his newly acquired divine powers and swept off his feet by the praise and adulation accompanying these Siddhis. This pitfall has been expressly mentioned in Yogtattva Upanishad in its verse nos. 51, 56, 60-62, 73-79. In short, a man with the dominant factor of Ahankar in him is proud of the achievements and successes that he has acquired with the help of his body, and since he is under the delusion that the body is his true identity, he wishes to show them off. The world is swept off its feet by people who possess some sort of super-human powers, and therefore the Siddhis or mystical powers displayed by an ascetic result in his gaining instant fame and name. The accompanying adulation and honours literally ‘go into his head’; he becomes so intoxicated that he loses his bearings. He falls from the high moral ground and the exalted

stature that he has gained so painstakingly with great labour, and instead lands in the marsh of this world from where he had planned to extricate himself when he had decided to do Yoga in the beginning. Ahankar becomes his greatest enemy, undercutting all his spiritual progress and proving to be his nemesis.] (37).

38. The physical body is the medium by which one can subdue and conquer all others in this world; it is the body by which one conquers vast lands and forces other creatures into submission. But the wise ascetic is one who practices Yoga and utilizes its stupendous powers to subdue and conquer this body itself. [By conquering the body, he proves that he is more powerful than the body because only one who is superior to the other can he subdue the latter. By doing so, he literally declares himself the 'emperor' of the world, for obviously now he can order the body—which has been subjugating all other subordinate creatures in the evolutionary ladder of this creation till now and lording over them—to do what he wants, to obey his commands. The body is difficult to control, and should the ascetic be able to control it he would have virtually conquered the world because it is the body that ties him down to this world and its material charms.]

Once subjugated and brought under control by the ascetic, the body becomes his subordinate and subservient to him. Thereafter, the body can no longer trouble him; it would be easy for him to free himself from the constant nagging by the body because now he has become the master and lord of the body (38).

39. Those who practice Yoga are able to conquer or subdue all their sense organs (i.e. they are able to exert self control over them). Resultantly, they are also able to conquer and subdue Mana (mind) and Buddhi (intellect), as well as the different negative character traits as Kaam (various worldly desires and passions), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness, spitefulness etc.)

By this symbolic conquest, he becomes an undisputed leader of all; he becomes an invincible power. He cannot be shackled by any force then (39).

40. By the virtue of his progressive powers and authority, a Yogi (an ascetic who practices Yoga) is able to subdue and put under tight leash all the five primary elements and other secondary elements¹ in creation. [Since the entire creation has been formed out of these five primary elements along with the secondary elements, by symbolically exerting his authority over them he establishes control over the entire animate as well as the inanimate creation.]

This gross body is physically like a cage constructed out of seven ingredients called the Dhaatus which form the structure of the physical gross body of the creature². Since it is also a part of this creation, it naturally follows that when an ascetic had conquered the rest of the creation he would automatically have subdued this body and its organs. Not only this, the fire of Yoga would burn this body for him so that this cage is eliminated and his soul can fly off to freedom³ (40).

[Note—¹The five primary elements are sky, air, fire, water and earth. The various secondary elements have been listed in Sharrirako-panishad, verse nos. 16-20.

²The gross body can be studied at two levels—the gross level consisting of its structural features called the *Dhaatus* which can be compared to molecular structure of any substance, and the subtle level consisting of the basic elements of Nature that constitute the fundamental units at the atomic level, called the Bhuts.

The Dhaatus are said to be seven in number. These stand for the structural constituent of the body which supports and sustains its existence. According to ancient Indian system of medicine, they are the following—(1) Rasa (lymph and mucous; sap), (2) Rakta (blood), (3) Maansa (flesh), (4) Meda (fat and muscles), (5) Ashthi (bones and cartilage), (6) Meja (marrow), and (7) Shukra (semen).

According to other interpretations, these seven Dhaatus which form the structural features of the gross body and give it its shape and support it are the following—(1) all forms of fluid ingredients such as blood, urine, mucous, lymph etc, (2) bone and cartilage, (3) marrow, (4) flesh, fat and muscles, (5) abdominal organs such as stomach etc, (6) skin, and (7) Naadis (arteries, veins, capillaries and nerves).

This level resembles the molecular structure of any chemical substance or any thing in this world for that matter that is made up of certain basic elements. The molecules are also not visible to the naked eye just like the ingredients of the body mentioned above except some of them such as the skin and mucous.

At the next level comes the atomic structure, or the subtle level of constitution of the body. It is like the atoms of any chemical molecule that make up the basic building blocks or units of that molecule. For example, Benzene has a hexagonal structure which would be like the gross structure of the creature's body called the Dhaatu, while the Carbon and Hydrogen atoms (C_6H_6) that go in to form the basic and fundamental ingredients of Benzene are like its subtle structure called the Bhut.

Thus, the five elements that constitute the body of the creature are the five elements that came into being at the time of creation. They are sky, air or wind, fire or energy, water or fluid, and earth. The Shaarirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 1-2 and 5-6 describe in detail how these five elements developed into the complex structure of the body.

Refer also to verse no. 56, 68 and 147 below of this Canto 1.

³It must be noted here that Yoga involves rigid exercises directed to ignite internal energy hitherto lying dormant in the body of the practitioner. When this energy is ignited, it is like firing the firewood stored in a wooden box or cage—how can this box survive the fire raging inside it? It's obvious that the wooden box or cage would be reduced to ashes by this internal fire. This is exactly what happens by practicing Yoga. In practical terms, when one fasts and observes other austerities, forsakes pampering the body and subjects it to rigours it is not accustomed to, it naturally withers and become thin and lean. Worldly people would call such a man emaciated and suffering from lack of nutrition, but there unaware of the stupendous mystical powers that such a man possesses. From the practical point of view also, a thin and well toned body creates the least problems by the way of various diseases such as upset tummy, joint pains, malfunctioning internal organs etc.]

41. A Yogi becomes astoundingly powerful and mystically empowered. Even the exalted Gods are not able to fathom his spiritual powers and prowess. He possesses numerous mystical qualities and spiritual virtues, knows the secret of what constitutes happiness and what is sorrow in the real sense, and is liberated from the endless cycle consisting of birth and death along with its incumbent problems. Consequentially, he becomes synonymous with and one like the divine entity (known as Brahm) that is eternal, imperishable, eclectic, supreme and transcendental, and which also possesses uncountable number of mystical and esoteric powers as the ones possessed by the said ascetic. [That is, an ascetic who sincerely, painstakingly and diligently practices Yoga and observes its strict tenets becomes spiritually exalted and acquires such astounding mystical powers that he becomes no less powerful than the supreme Brahm himself.

None of the numerous Gods can match him and his authority and powers. This is because these individual Gods represent one or the other aspect of Brahm's divine attributes, but the concerned ascetic becomes a personification of all the divine attributes of Brahm in their entirety.](41).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 51, 53-54, 59-60, 73-75, 87, 91, 94, 97, 102, 105-130.]

42. The body of a practicing ascetic becomes as pure, untainted, cleansed, holy and unattached with any thing in this world like the sky. In fact, it becomes purer, cleaner, holier and more detached than the sky itself¹.

He acquires such mystical and divine powers that he might become the grossest and heaviest thing in existence in the first moment, and then as easily turn into the subtlest and most sublime one in existence in the next moment. In fact, even while having a gross body like ordinary creatures and acting most oddly and unconventionally at times, he still remains very subtle and sublime internally in the form of his 'true ethereal self'² (42).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 98-102. The sky has a unique quality—it harbours the entire creation in its bosom as nothing that exist lies outside the outer periphery of the sky, but still it remains completely detached from each and every thing present inside it. The sky remains unaffected, uninfluenced, unattached with and untainted by anything that it harbours or shelters. Whatever visual attributes that one sees in the sky, such as its blue or azure haze, the changing colours at different times of the day, are only optical illusions created by various factors of Nature. Even the clouds or the sun in the day time and the stars and the moon in the night do not effect the neutral nature of the sky because while the sun is there the sky appears to be bright and sunny, and when the moon rises the same sky assumes the colour of the moonlight with no indication that it was so bright earlier. The overcast sky with dark clouds becomes crystal clear when the clouds go away, and the darkness of the night sky dotted with umpteen numbers of stars can give no indication that it would be brightly lit during the day with no trace of any single star. The plumes of pungent smoke being belched into the sky by factories and fires do not effect the bland and neutral form of the sky, for the sky absorbs them all with great equanimity and fortitude without being affected by them at all.

Everything in existence needs the sky to develop and grow. The fire needs space representing the sky to burn, the air needs it to flow, the earth needs it to remain in its place and move around the sun which in turn regulates the seasons and other environmental factors, the plants need it for their growth and development as is proved by the fact that they become stunted and die in the want of space to grow and spread their branches, the creature needs it to breathe, stand and grow, and so on and so forth. The air can be sucked out from an enclosed space to create a vacuum, but the 'sky' would still be there. The world would die and go into oblivion along with all its components, including the other four elements (earth, fire, water and air) at the time of conclusion of creation, but the sky would still be there; in fact it is in the vast bottomless pit of the sky that the creation would vanish then. And when the time comes for the emergence of the new creation, it would do so in the bowl of the sky. Nothing exists beyond the sky.

From the metaphysical angle, Brahm and sky are often regarded as being analogous because they exhibit almost identical properties and attributes—such as being fathomless, vast, eternal, imperishable, infinite, all-pervading, all-encompassing, incorruptible and untainted etc.

The sky or space is the subtlest of the five elements—viz. earth, water, fire, wind/air, space/sky. It pervades everywhere but is uncorrupt, unpolluted and faultless in all respects. The blemishes, faults, vices, evils, sins, corruptions, misdemeanors and all sorts of digressions present in the world are like suspended dust particles, smoke, moisture, clouds, the numerous other things such as the various birds and the celestial bodies high up in the sky which create an illusion of a sky that is spotted or dotted or polluted or coloured or overcast with these uncountable objects that are extraneous to the sky, that are not integral to it but nevertheless appear to be a part of the sky. The sky has nothing to do with them; it remains absolutely unconcerned with and untainted by them, for once they are removed from the scene the sky is uniform and spotless from one end of the horizon to the other. This example is very practical and can be observed by anyone. That is why 'sky' is used as a metaphor to describe anything that remains free from the influences of those things that appear to be an integral part of it but are in actual fact not related with it by even any remote chance.

The sky has the opposite types of characteristics present in it. For example, the space of the vast cosmos has no form but the space inside a bottle or a pot takes the shape of the bottle or the pot respectively. Similarly, the vast sky in its basic and truthful form is spotless and without any colours, but it appears to be spotted with so many stars and specs of clouds and smoke of different colours as well as with birds of different forms, colours and shapes flying here and there. The colour of the sky during the evening or morning hours present a canvas of so many colours which appear to be real, but they are obviously a reflection of the colours of the light of the sun as reflected from the various impurities present in the otherwise spotless sky.

The sky has such grand and majestic attributes as being vast, measureless, uniform, immutable, spotless, clean, colourless, calm, all-pervading, all-encompassing etc. The sky is the measurement of Brahm in the sense that if it was ever possible to measure the length, breadth and depth of the sky, it would then have been possible to measure Brahm. But that is not at all the case. The calmness of the higher reaches of the sky is experienced by Para gliders and can even be witnessed on top of mountains which are high above the ground and located somewhere in the space around the earth, symbolised by the sky, where there is an eerie silence. The sky has no colours of its own; whatever colours that we see are actually the scattered sunlight.

Everything that exists does so in any one of these spaces. Every nook and corner where there is no solid or liquid is filled with space or 'Akash', which is a synonym of sky. It is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing. That is, these three forms of the skies, viz. the outer, the inner and that which is present inside the heart, are all the same; there is no distinction or demarcation or boundary or fundamental difference between any two skies. The apparent boundary or limitation imposed on the sky by the physical body or the membrane of the heart is only deceptive in nature. Once a person dies, for example, his body perishes, and the space present inside the heart merges indistinguishably with the space present inside the body when the body is cremated or decays when buried, and they together merge with the vast space present outside the body.

The 'sky', which was originally conceived as something that was 'void' or 'nothing', gets filled with 'air', simply because void can't exist, and the creation which came into being in this void needed some base for its origin and coming into being. The molecules or atoms of air are in a state of continuous agitation and flux; they collide with each other, they form a chain of molecules which give rise to different layers or strata of air which extend from the surface of this earth to the stratosphere. This continuous turmoil produces 'sound'. Various physical and chemical processes come into play, producing gases of varying density and characteristic features. Air has particles of dust and different

gases, which produce the perception of touch. Friction of the various molecules present in the air produces static electricity which is observed as a scintillating display of atmospheric discharge of electrically charged particles in the sky often observed at the poles. This sparkle of static electric discharge is synonymous with 'fire'. Perhaps the Upanishadic sage got this brilliant idea when he observed a meteor shower during the night. The two elementary gases hydrogen and oxygen combine to form the molecule H_2O commonly known as 'water'. With all these essential ingredients in place, the solidifying and cooling down process of nature starts its effect and produces soil and rocks which are symbolised by the 'earth' element. Then gravity and magnetic forces come into play, giving density, gravity and grossness, indicative of the grossness or heaviness of not only the earth but also of the air around it. Previously, before gravity and other forces of nature came into play, this air was subtle and very light; it spread universally and uniformly to all the corners of the cosmos. But with the gradual formation of different celestial bodies from the primordial cosmic gases, each having its own gravity and other natural physical and chemical forces, the air was pulled or sucked in, leaving the rest of the space beyond the reach of these celestial bodies into a big void.

The sky is pregnant with a wide variety of impurities. It is full of celestial bodies besides cosmic debris. It has the burning furnace of the sun as well as the cool pitcher of nectar symbolised by the moon. The black clouds of a storm with its stabs of ferocious lightening coexist with white fluffy clouds floating lazily across the calm sky. There are birds of prey and there are harmless kites flying in it. There is the polluted haze of the city as is the pristine clear atmosphere of a village and the mountain. There is the brightness of the day and the foreboding darkness of the night. But the wonder is that none of these really affect the sky at all—it remains clear and untainted in its basic nature and form. All these things cited here are extraneous to the fundamental nature and characteristic of the sky. The sky treats all of them with the same magnanimity and kindness. Similarly, a wise man treats all the creatures with whom he has to interact in this world with the same equanimity and fortitude as the sky.

²It is often observed that a self-realised man acts most ordinarily and seems to be submerged neck-deep in worldly affairs. He may do things not expected of a sane man. For instance, he may speak incessantly for a long time like a chatterbox, appear to be most affable and malleable in one instant and then suddenly become silent like a reclusive monk, turning stubborn, taciturn and recalcitrant in his behaviour in the other moment. His behaviour is unpredictable because he is not bothered about what the world thinks of him, and also because he is not even aware of what his body does, because all deeds and behaviours are limited to the body and have nothing to do with the soul. His external behaviour does not reflect his internal 'self' in the least. It is only when one identifies oneself with the body that he becomes responsible for the deeds and actions of the body, but this does not apply to the ascetic who has virtually abandoned the body and identifies himself with the pure consciousness or Atma which does nothing and remains merely a neutral observer of what the body does. So the deeds and actions of the body neither affect him nor can they be linked to him.

Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 51, 107-111.]

43. An expert ascetic who has mastered the art of doing Yoga acquires astounding mystical powers that enable him to assume whatever form he desires¹.

He becomes free from all bodily ailments, especially continuous decline of the body and problems associated with old age (and such other physical ailments as well as mental, emotional and other psychological problems). He becomes immortal and not subjected to death as it occurs to other mortal creatures².

As a result, he can freely go anywhere he wishes in the three Lokas (the terrestrial, the nether and the heavenly worlds)³ (43).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 51, 73-75, 108-110.

²Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 45, 57-60, 87, 90-91, 94, 97, 104, 107-110, 127, 140-141.

³Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 73-75, 102, 105, 109-110.]

44. The mystical and enigmatic powers that the ascetic acquires are beyond imagination. He has acquired full control over all his sense organs. He not only is able to assume any form he wishes but also to change it by reverting to his original form or assuming a new form. (44).

[Note—These mystical powers are collectively called ‘Siddhis’. They are eight in number, such as (i) ‘Anima’ ‘अणिमा’ means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) ‘Mahima’ ‘महिमा’ is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one’s achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) ‘Garima’ ‘गरिमा’ is to have weight, stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) ‘Laghima’ ‘लघिमा’ is to have simplicity and humility; (v) ‘Praapti’ ‘प्राप्ति’ is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) ‘Paraakram’ ‘पराक्रम’ is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) ‘Ishwatwa’ ‘ईशवत्त्व’ is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) ‘Vashitwa’ ‘वशित्व’ is to be able to control and subdue others.

Refer verse no. 138 and 149 of Canto 1 of this Upanishad which says that all these Siddhis are possible when the ascetic is able to successfully complete the four steps of Yoga—i.e. the Mantra, Hath, Laya and Raaj Yogas. Refer also to Yogtattva Upanishad verse nos. 73-74, 104-111.]

45. Such an expert and acclaimed Yogi (ascetic) does not die in the conventional sense of death for he has already burnt his gross body and its sense of existence in the symbolic fire of Yoga¹. What has already been dead or burnt cannot die again or be burnt again².

So when he wishes to die under traditional meaning of the term ‘death’, he would do so by doing ‘Hath Yoga’³ voluntarily rather than clinging greedily to the body, not wanting to abandon it, and suffering the horrors of death (as described above in verse no. 28-33). That is, he would not like to stick around till the time the body itself decays after it has almost outlived its tenure because of the fact that it is made of decayable matter and has to come to an end one or the other day; it is not eternal and imperishable as the pure conscious Atma. So, rather than wait for the body to start decaying as is its natural wont, the wise ascetic himself abandons it by doing the rigorous exercises of Yoga, called ‘Hath Yoga’, and voluntarily discards the body like the serpent discards its outer cuticle when it is ripe and old (45).

[Note—¹This ‘death or burning’ of the body and its organs is of great symbolic value for the ascetic, for now as long as he lives he feels as free as the ‘ethereal spirit’ can hope to be. This means that he has realised that ‘he’ is none but the ‘eternally free ethereal spirit’ called the ‘sublime Atma or soul’ that was trapped in the gross body from which it has now found liberation and deliverance by the means of Yoga. That is also why he can assume any form he wishes, and go wherever he wants. It is obvious that he wouldn’t be able to do so if the body had been there with all its attendant practical restrictions and limitations. Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 81-109.

Conventionally a man dies when his body gets old and decays gradually to a stage when it is no longer able to sustain itself and all its organs fail to function and come to a standstill. This type of death is very painful and tormenting for the Pran or life forces present inside the body. This Pran is sort of torn off forcefully from the flesh and bones of the body much like an animal's hide is skinned or wool sheared from a sheep. The Pran tries its best to cling to the body but it is compelled to leave it, resulting in extreme agony for the creature. Now, who is this 'creature'? Herein lies the secret that an enlightened ascetic is privy to—it is the Atma and not the body; the pure self of the ascetic is his consciousness called the soul or Atma. That is why by burning the body with the fire ignited by Yoga he is not harming the 'self' but only burning the cage of the body in which it is trapped. Refer verse no. 40 above of this Canto 1.

This 'death' is the glorious interpretation of the term death as well as of Yoga; it has a metaphysical implication more than physical aspect of Yoga and death. The latter aspect is explained in the next stanza when it is said that the ascetic finally sheds his physical gross body by the process of 'Hath Yoga' after having symbolically eliminated the body and burning it in the fire of wisdom and enlightenment obtained by becoming acquainted with the profound philosophical and metaphysical teachings of Yoga that has led him to realise his true 'self' and its astounding divine and mystical potentials. That is, he practices the physical exercises of Yoga, controls his vital functions and collects all the vital winds called the life-giving Pran from all the corners of the body, diverts them up the Sushumna Naadi, the central nerve going up to the top of the head from its base in the Kundalini, the coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine, to finally reach the head. In the process, the consciousness called the Atma joins this Pran, riding piggy back on it, and ultimately both of them make their exit from the body through the Brahm Randhra, the hair-like slit on the top of the head, to merge with the wind and sky element outside the body and become one with the latter. Meanwhile, the body disintegrates into its constituent parts, such as the earth, water and fire elements which it was formed. The breakdown is completed and final Mukti, i.e. liberation and deliverance is obtained. This is called Kaivalya form of Mukti.

Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 106-109.

²So what has already died or burnt cannot die again or be burnt again. For all practical purposes the ascetic has already burnt his body when he has burnt his Ahankar (refer verse no. 35-37). That is why under traditional norms, the body of a dead ascetic is not cremated by fire but directly immersed in the water of a river. If that is not feasible, it is buried under ground. This is because his 'dead gross body' is just like the ash that remains after a normal human body is cremated by burning it on the funeral pyre after his death. The ash is collected and immersed in holy rivers or buried in pots underground if this emersion is not practically possible to indicate the merger of the elements that constituted the body with the primary elements of Nature.

³Refer also to verse nos. 133-134 of Canto 1 below in the present context. The concept of Hath Yoga has also been explained in Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 19, 129. Basically it involves rigorous physical exercises of breath control and other exercises such as the various Mudras and Aasans as enumerated in verse nos. 81-130 of Yogtattva Upanishad, as well as other Upanishads dealing with the concept of Yoga.]

46. That state which is regarded by ignorant worldly people as 'death' is deemed to be the state of 'life eternal' by the Yogi (practicing ascetic), while that state which is traditionally regarded by people as the 'living one' is deemed to be 'death' by him (46).

[Note—Traditionally to 'live' means remaining active in this material world, remaining engrossed in myriad worldly deeds and activities, establishing odd relationships and

forging newer ones, procreating and then striving to provide for the new generation, acquiring wealth and generally contributing to material enhancement and growth of this material world, and in the process enjoying and suffering all the consequences that attend this involvement. This 'living' entails the involvement of the gross body in a world which is perishable and the cause of spiritual miseries.

Now, for a spiritually evolved ascetic, such involvement would be tantamount to killing his soul; it would destroy the very purpose for which his 'self' has obtained this gross body, which is to find spiritual liberation and deliverance instead of re-entering the cycle of birth and death once again by losing the golden opportunity which the body provides. How does the body provide him the golden opportunity? It is by the means of the human body that Yoga can be done and Gyan can be acquired; animals, insects, worms and plants cannot avail of this chance even though they also come under the category of living beings. So by allowing himself to be engrossed in this material world, the ascetic has virtually killed once in a lifetime opportunity to break free from the cycle of birth and death and its attendant horrors and delusions.

On the other hand, when the body becomes lifeless (i.e. when it stops showing signs of consciousness, life and mobility), or when Pran and other vital life forces leave the body and the latter becomes limp and a lifeless bundle of rapidly decaying skin, tissues, flesh and bones, it is regarded conventionally as 'dead'. But metaphysically the creature has not died; it has not perished at all. The reason is that the body was not the 'true self' in the first place, because it is the conscious Atma or the soul which is inherently eternal, imperishable and immortal. When the physical body dies, it actually means that this 'true self' or the conscious soul of the person has simply left it for some other destination just like one leaves his home to find some new home after migration to a new country. Obviously therefore, there is no question of 'death or dying' for a self-realised and wise ascetic when the gross physical body is shed by him, either voluntarily as done by Hath Yoga when the ascetic decides to pull out his Pran out of the body willingly by rigorous meditation exercises, or involuntarily as done during Samadhi, the immortal, transcendental and trance-like sublime state of 'non-being' in this physical gross and mortal world. During 'Hath Yoga' he is doing rigorous exercises such as different Aasans and Mudras (sitting postures), Bandhas (closure of apertures in the body), Pranayam (breath control), Dhyana (meditation and contemplation), Yama and Niyams (observance of various self-control principles and other tenets of Yoga) etc., but during 'Samadhi' he is under no obligation to do any of these because he is so absorbed in contemplation and meditation that he is not even aware of his own existence in this physical world, he is so engrossed in his inner self that he is completely numb to all sensations, let alone the sense of awareness to observe this or that rule. Samadhi marks the exemplary state of transcendental neutrality and spiritual exaltedness when the attention is totally focused on the pure consciousness and the inner self with its attendant bliss and ecstasy that the practitioner has no inclination or time to think of anything else, what to talk of the gross body and what it is doing or is supposed to do in this gross world. In fact, in this state he is not even aware of the presence of the body at all.

These two states of Yoga—viz. Hath and Samadhi—are not in exclusion of each other but inclusive in nature. They both are parts of the composite structure of Yoga, complimenting and supplementing each other. The Samadhi is the culmination of Yoga, while Hath is the path leading to it; how can one reach the goal without treading the correct path, and what good is the path if the destination is not reached?

An enlightened, attained and self-realised ascetic does not die like an ordinary ignorant man who does not understand the real meaning of death, leaving him fretting and fuming during his last days and last moments because he wishes to make a last ditch attempt to retain this body. How stupid is he indeed! Is he not aware that the body cannot

be made to 'live indefinitely' because it is inherently decayable and perishable? Everything in this material world has a fixed time-frame and fixed life span; they cannot last eternally. Even the fathomless and infinite cosmos has an end and it would come to an end one day.

Anything that is not eternal and not steady cannot be the 'truth' because the 'truth' is always uniform, immutable, unchanging, universal, eternal and everlasting. Since the body is constantly changing right from its conception in the mother's womb till the time it develops wrinkles and becomes decrepit and hopelessly problematic, and finally decays and falls down dead and lifeless inspite of the best of upkeep and care that one takes for it, it follows that it is not the 'truth'. Then, is it not the height of stupidity for grieving for such a body and regarding it as the 'self'? Besides this, the body is a nasty bundle of flesh and bones, of waste matter such as mucous, urine, stool etc. Is a man not ashamed at calling such a filthy bag as his 'self'? Of course the Yogi thinks otherwise; he regards his pure consciousness, the Atma or soul as his 'true self', and the latter never dies. After the so-called 'death' of the gross body, this Atma or the 'true self' of the Yogi simply migrates to some other place.]

47. The wise and enlightened Yogi has no obligations left. He is not attached to and interested in any deed or activity. [For he wishes to remain a neutral observer to what the body does out of its own volition.]

Such a Yogi is said to be 'Jivan Mukta', i.e. he is liberated and delivered even while he lives in this world with a gross body. He becomes free from all taints and other faults; he becomes immaculate and pure and completely cleaned in every way (47).

[Note—The various taints and faults have enumerated in verse no. 10-11 above of this Canto 1.]

48. There are certain categories of people who call themselves as 'Gyani and Virakta', i.e. they proclaim that they are wise, erudite, sagacious, learned and enlightened as well as renunciates who have the correct knowledge of the truth and have consequentially detached themselves from this artificial material world and its sense objects. But on close analysis they have no comparison with a Yogi, an ascetic who diligently practices the principles of Yoga.

This is because such people who boast of their knowledge, learning and wisdom are really imposters who are slaves of their bodies and its natural urges; they yearn for self-gratification and spend their entire life caring for the body, attending to its demands and feeding its insatiable worldly desires and aspirations. Their proclamations of renunciation sound mere hollow boasts made to merely enhance their stature amongst their followers to get more material mileage with them, for had they been truly enlightened and self-realised, they would not have been so worried about their healthy and well toned bodies and their worldly fame as they are usually found to be. They would not gather a crowd of disciples and followers and get worshipped and adored as they are usually seen to be doing.

Such people are contemptible and condemnable. They are nothing better than a mass of flesh (i.e. a body made of gross materials which has no real worth in the field of spiritualism). They can never be true Gyanis and Vairagis. [That is, they can never qualify to be called truly enlightened, attained, wise and self-realised—or 'Gyanis', and they can never be truly called a person who has developed an extreme sense of renunciation, detachment, indifference and dispassion for all things that are not true and

real from the spiritual point of view—or Vairaagis. If a person becomes enlightenment and spiritually exalted, it would automatically mean that he would have learnt the futility of boasting of his knowledge, for knowledge is like an ocean and no one can measure it from end to end; he would shun pursuing worldly fame and bothering too much about the gross and perishable body about which he is convinced that it is of no consequence. Previously it has already been emphasised that to feel proud of one's self and one's body, to advertise one's achievements and noble virtues such as the eclectic virtues of Gyan (knowledge) and Vairagya (sense of detachment), is in itself a sign of ignorance or Agyan which is the opposite of Gyan of which the ascetic is boasting about—refer verse no. 12, 15, 34-39 of this Canto 1.]

On the contrary, a truly enlightened, self-realised and wise Yogi is self-contained and inwards looking; he prefers seclusion and quiet; he prefers to spend his time and energy in meditation and contemplation along with enhancing and augmenting his spiritual achievements instead of milking it for material gains. He would not go around advertising his stupendous mystical powers. [Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 76-79 which expressly prohibit such things.] (48).

49. Even learned, erudite and the so-called wise people who are well versed with the knowledge contained in the scriptures, i.e. those who are called 'Gyanis', have to die and enjoy or suffer the consequences of their good or bad deeds done in the previous life. After the rewards or punishment period is over, they have to come back to take a new birth again as a Gyani (49).

[Note—The person dies and takes a new birth to enjoy the rewards of good deeds done by him in his previous life, or to suffer from the bad effects of misdeeds. Once a stage is reached when all the past deeds and their consequences are exhausted and nothing remains as a baggage to be carried forward to the next life after death, it is then that an enlightened man becomes eligible or entitled to revert back to his original state from which came to such a horrible pass when he got trapped in the complicated cog and wheel structure of worldly delusions, the cycle of deeds and consequences and its accompanying cycle of birth and death to such an extent that he finds himself lost in the labyrinthine catacomb from which he finds it difficult to get out.

Freeing one self by getting rid of deeds is not so easy as it seems on the surface because the equation gets progressively complicated when in the second birth taken to enjoy or suffer the consequences of the first birth, he does other deeds which in turn produce their own set of consequences. This way the cycle continues, spinning out of control and getting more and more complicated and intertwined with each turn of the wheel of birth and death. It is only when true wisdom and enlightenment dawns on the person and he distances himself from the body which is actually doing the deed that he is qualified to be called a renunciate and detached from the deeds as well as being a truly self-realised and enlightened person. If this happens by good luck, then he is said to be back to square number one. Now comes his golden chance to break free from the cycle of birth and death. How? This question is answered next. See also note to verse nos. 51-52 also.]

50. If the good effects of deeds done by him weigh more in his favour combined with his true awakening, he comes in contact with a 'Siddha', or an ascetic who has succeeded in his Yoga and consequentially obtained certain mystical and divine spiritual powers that are only accessible after success in Yoga is obtained and not before. In other words, he

comes in contact with a truly self-realised and enlightened person as compared with imposters and fame-seekers. This is his great fortune!

If this true Yogi (i.e. an ascetic who has become self-realised and is truly enlightened and spiritually attained) who is approached by a sincere spiritual aspirant or seeker of the 'truth' becomes pleased with him, i.e. if the former sees that the latter has the right aptitude and decides that his soul has reached spiritual maturity and has thus become eligible to be initiated into the path of Yoga, he blesses him. That is, the spiritually attained and expert Yogi accepts the spiritual aspirant as his disciple and makes him privy to the secrets of Yoga; he advises him on the various aspects of the path ahead and guides him along because he is the most competent man to do so as he has had himself a first hand experience of Yoga and its various landmark signs of successes as well as the numerous pitfalls that are encountered on the way.

This is the only way the spiritual aspirant and seeker of 'truth' can become a successful Yogi himself, and not otherwise. [That is, merely reading of Yoga in the scriptures is not enough without the able guidance of a true teacher. This is a very treacherous path and very dangerous to follow without proper guidance.] (50).

51. It is only then that the spiritual aspirant's worldly fetters are broken; there is no other way out for him to break free from the cycle of birth and death¹. Oh Brahma! The words of Lord Shiva are not in vain and not without weight. [In other words, what Shiva speaks is indeed the truth.]

Gyan (knowledge of the reality and awareness of the truthful nature of the self, this wisdom) is not entirely able to give Moksha (liberation and deliverance) on its own without the support of Yoga (making relevant efforts to reach one's spiritual goal, to sincerely pursue it without wavering, and implementing the great tenets of Yoga philosophy in letter and spirit). [In other words, merely knowledge of what has been said in the scriptures about the pure self, the Atma, the supreme transcendental Brahm etc. are insufficient to achieve success in self-realisation and Brahm-realisation which leads the path towards breaking free from the cycle of birth and death. This profound and sublime knowledge has to be supplemented and complemented with making effort in this direction and practicing the great teachings in life.] (51).

[Note—¹Previously in verse nos. 48-49 of this Canto 1 it has been explained how and why even a person who is called a 'Gyani'—i.e. a person who has knowledge of the various eclectic truths expounded and enunciated by the scriptures, who has thoroughly studied them and is well versed in their doctrines and tenets, can still remain ensnared in the cobweb of ignorance and delusions as well as trapped in the cycle of birth and death. Normally a person who has acquired 'Gyan', i.e. who has become enlightened and realised, should not face this fate because Gyan is meant to bestow liberation and deliverance, and not trap anyone. If this objective of spiritual emancipation and salvation is not achieved for the reasons enumerated in the aforesaid verses and elsewhere then the very purpose of gaining Gyan is defeated. If a man remains trapped in captivity inspite of the knowledge of how to break free from his captivity and bondage, then there is no use of his having this knowledge, and all the efforts made and time and energy spent in this direction go down the drain. Hence, such a man is called an 'Agyani' for all practical purposes inspite of his having studied the scriptures and having a literal knowledge of their texts.

But there is a subtle difference between the man who is called Agyani because he has not even read the scriptures and is not aware of the reality, and a man who is Agyani

because he has forgotten his goal and got charmed by the enticements proffered by the material world. In the latter case, a stage is reached when he is fed up of everything and wishes for true peace and rest. Then at least he has the required knowledge of what to do, how to do it etc. He has the technical know-how to proceed in the correct direction once he realises his follies and shortcomings; he knows how to repent and atone for his misdeeds and how to break free from this cycle of deeds and their consequences. As compared to this lucky man, the poor chap who is not even aware of the path and the means to find out the path gets completely lost. But even this man can achieve success if he has the will and the grit, though it would take more time and energy for him to obtain freedom as compared to the Gyani who has already done his initial homework previously but was misled from the chosen path due to his own stupidity.

A truly Agyani man would not even be aware that he is an Agyani, that he is trapped and needs freedom, that he is suffering from avoidable miseries which are his own creation, and there are ways to overcome them. He would think that it is his fate and blame the gods for his torments. On the other hand, the Gyani would realise that surely there must be some flaw in his method of handling things that has caused him so much suffering, and then he would patiently go about analyzing the reason for his sufferance and endeavour to find a way out of this quagmire instead of blaming his fate and the gods for them. So he approaches a wise, competent and expert teacher and guide to advise him, to show him the way to address and fix his spiritual problems. It is this 'teacher and guide', called a Guru', who is being referred to in this present verse. Though both the teacher and the disciple are Gyanis in their own right, the former is better positioned than the latter because he had successfully implemented what he had learnt from the scriptures and has reached his spiritual goal while the latter failed to do so and hence need expert guidance. The Guru has reached the exalted stature of self-realisation and has tasted the elixir of spiritual bliss, while the disciple is still on his way. See verse no. 52 below which reiterates this observance.

Refer also to verse nos. 13-15 of this Canto 1 of this Upanishad as well as verse no. 14-18 of Yogtattva Upanishad.]

52. Likewise, Yoga cannot be successful and its full potentials realised without the help and support of Gyan. They should be coordinated and judiciously mixed in order to achieve success and reap the combined benefits of both¹.

It is after many births (i.e. after a very long time and many ups and downs) that Gyan inspires an aspirant to pursue Yoga² (52).

[Note--¹It is an obvious observation. In order to succeed in any endeavour whatsoever, one must have a thorough knowledge of that field. Otherwise it would be like jumping in the ocean without proper preparation and knowledge of swimming—inviting certain death by drowning. If one wishes to cook food, he must also know how to light the stove and how to put it off; just the knowledge of switching on the electric oven is not enough if one does not know how to switch it off.

²This is because originally a spiritual aspirant was under the impression that obtaining knowledge and expertise as to what is the truth would empower him to obtain access to that truth. But in practice he gets bogged down in delusions and false sense of pride of knowledge. The result is far from his expectations, for though now he would refrain from indulging in misdeeds and sinful acts, but he would continue to do good deeds in the hope that their good effect would provide him liberation and deliverance. But they don't, and this fact has been stressed earlier in verse nos. 48-51. When finally true wisdom dawns upon his intellect and he wonders why this situation has arisen, he then strives to find out the cause and the remedy—and it is then that Gyan comes to his

aid once again. It enlightens him that he needs to practice Yoga in order to fully realise the benefits of obtaining Gyan. In other words, he must implement the knowledge that the scriptures teach in their correct fashion, with the correct perspective and in the proper context. The word 'Yoga' itself means to forge a union between two entities. So he realises that all the limbs of Gyan, all its various branches and sub-branches are to be effectively coordinated to bring about some meaningful benefit from them. Its like an orchestra—every step of music played by different musical instruments have to be in perfect and constant harmony with each other; each member has to be perfectly in sync with all the other members of the team—otherwise the music of the orchestra comes apart; even one misstep would grind the entire orchestra to a halt.

The effort to effectively bring about the union of the individual Atma with the supreme Atma of creation is called Yoga, and the attainment of the ultimate destiny of the soul whereby it finds eternal peace and tranquility is the real purpose of Gyan. It helps in obtaining final liberation and deliverance of the soul, called realising Moksha, an achievement that provides the ultimate emancipation and salvation to the creature. After that, he would not have to enter the cycle of birth and death anymore. Hence, Yoga and Gyan are like the two legs of a person by the help of which he reaches his spiritual destination easily.]

53. On the contrary, if one is empowered by the spiritual strength that Yoga (meditation and contemplation) provides, Gyan (truthful knowledge of the reality the soul and its stupendous potentials; self-realisation) can be obtained in one lifetime itself (i.e. in a short time span and without much effort)¹.

Hence, there is no better path for obtaining Moksha (liberation and deliverance from ignorance and delusions about this world and body) than Yoga² (53).

[Note—¹To understand how this is made possible, we can take the following simple example. A science student learns the basics of science more easily if he sees the principles being applied in practice as compared to the case when he has to grasp their meaning merely from text books in an abstract manner. Practice is a better tool for learning than mere theory. So by practicing the principles of Yoga, of which meditation and contemplation are important and unavoidable tools, a spiritual aspirant is better placed and equipped to understand the real meaning of the concept of the terms 'true self' and 'self-realisation' than merely reading about them in theory form in the voluminous texts of the scriptures and hearing about them in long religious discourses. Yoga is a quicker and more effective method, a sort of practical laboratory for implementing and putting into effect the knowledge acquired through the process of Gyan.

²This is because meditation and contemplation would wizen the spiritual aspirant about his true self, and he would then realise that the body which he had hitherto being treating as his 'self' is a fallacious notion. In other words, he breaks free from this basic fetter; he manages to liberate himself from this ignorance and its attendant delusions. Once the body-factor and its attending problems are eliminated, there is freedom of the 'spirit'; the aspirant does not have to get tied to the deeds done by the body and neither is he bothered about this world which he had needed to look after this body, to take care of the body's needs. This is called Jivan Mukti. Refer also to verse no. 47 of this Canto 1 above.]

54. A spiritual aspirant thinks that by practicing Gyan, i.e. doing meditation and contemplation, for a long time would lead him to obtaining Mukti or Moksha. That is, he thinks that acquisition of knowledge and deeply meditating upon its profound truths would lead him to obtaining liberation and deliverance from this world of ignorance and

delusions; it would help him to break free from the fetters of this perishable body by dissociating himself from it and the deeds done by it. But this is a long drawn and time consuming process. It cannot provide an instant liberation and deliverance (as is possible by Yoga). (54).

[Note—Essentially this verse means that Yoga is able to deliver results in a shorter time span as compared to following the path of Gyan. The word ‘Yoga’ itself indicates this fact—it brings a union between two units; it acts like a coupling used in trains to join two coaches. It brings to fruition more quickly the benefits of Gyan. This is because Yoga puts to test the theoretical knowledge obtained by Gyan. Here the word ‘Gyan’ is to be interpreted as knowledge and erudition, as expertise in the knowledge of the scriptures, while ‘Yoga’ would be its practical application. This is supported by verse no. 98 which says that a Gyani, a person who has Gyan, continues to take birth and death and remain engrossed in worldly pursuance. How is it ever possible to do so if he is an enlightened and wise and self-realised person in the first place? It proves that his Gyan is merely superficial and he has not obtained any real benefit by studying the scriptures.

Herein lies the role of Yoga—it bridges the gap between theory and practice. Only by putting foot on the bridge can one cross the river; merely sighting the other bank of the river or the knowledge of what lies there would be of no practical value. Asking others about what lies on the other side of the river and imagining of it and spending one’s lifetime in such thoughts is like mere pursuance of Gyan, while actually crossing the river on the bridge is like taking the help of Yoga to reach the other side. Refer verse nos. 49-53.]

55. Even if hundreds of births have passed, whenever one finds Mukti (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) it is only thorough the strength of Yoga.

Yoga helps one to break free from the cycle of birth and death. Those who practice Yoga do not have to take repeated births and die again and again (55).

[Note—It ought to be noted here that since this Upanishad is Yoga-centric, it is obvious that it would stress the importance of this spiritual field and emphasise that it is the only superior path to liberation and deliverance. It is not to demean the importance of Gyan in spiritualism, because it has already been stressed in the very beginning that both Yoga and Gyan are needed for spiritual liberation and deliverance—refer verse no. 13 of this Canto 1 above.]

56. Yoga enables one to mix the two vital winds called Pran (the breath) and Apaana (the wind that moves down in the intestines and which is responsible for digestion and elimination of waste from the anus). This is like bringing about a union of the sun and the moon². This creates such a rare symbolic configuration of cosmic forces of Nature that it becomes possible to kindle the hitherto dormant but all-pervading subtle cosmic energy symbolising the inherent divine powers and strength of the ‘self’ or pure consciousness that lay hidden inside the body made up of the seven basic structural ingredients called the ‘Dhaatus’¹ (56).

[Note—¹The seven Dhaatus of the Body are the structural features or basic ingredients of the gross physical body. They have been elaborately explained above as note to verse no. 40 of this Canto no. 1.

²Verse nos. 68, 116-117 and 133-134 of this Canto describes how a symbolic union of the sun and the moon is brought about, and what the reward of this union is.]

57. With the awakening or kindling of this latent divine dynamic energy inside the body brought about by Yoga, all the ailments and hurdles that had been tormenting the ascetic are removed. In this state, the ascetic has no fear of the body being pierced by any sharp thing, or its decay and falling down. This is because the ascetic has no relationship with the physical gross body any longer in this state of self-realised existence during which he lives not as someone with a gross body but as someone in the sublime and subtle form of the all-pervading 'sky' element.

In other words, he lives not as someone with a gross physical body having a fixed form and shape and subjected to all sorts of limitations that are incumbent to things that are gross and physical in nature but as one who is to be identified with the ethereal Spirit known as the pure conscious Atma, and this Atma in its primary form as the eternal and infinite spirit is uniformly dispersed throughout the length and breadth of the creation just like the air element is uniformly distributed and ubiquitously present in the entire space that is defined as the 'sky'.

The Spirit and the Pran (i.e. the ethereal Atma and the vital life-infusing wind element respectively) are synonymous with each other for all practical purposes. Since the air or wind element pervades throughout the length and breadth of the sky, it is a natural corollary that the Spirit is also ubiquitously present everywhere where there is the sky, and there is no place in creation where the sky is not present! As compared to them, the gross body is limited to a particular point in space; it cannot be uniformly diffused and universally omnipresent in the entire creation like either the sky or the air element (57).

[Note—When the ascetic is able to extract himself from the entanglements of the web-like body consisting of the gross ingredients as enumerated in note to verse no. 56 above, he finds liberation and freedom to move around without the limiting and shackling effects of the cage-like body. This body is both cage-like as well as web-like. The external features of the body such as the skin and the bones act like the cage, the blood and mucus act like the moat around the fort in which the creature's Atma is trapped, and the veins and nerves act like the web or net tied around its neck and legs with which this Atma is shackled to the cage. The fire of Yoga burns this web or net along with the cage, and lets the bird in the form of the Atma fly off to freedom.]

58. What is the use of saying anything more or stressing the point further? It is sufficient to say that a true and self-realised Yogi (i.e. an ascetic who sincerely practices Yoga in a holistic manner) does not die. He lives in this world like any other living being who has a body, but like a piece of camphor that has been burnt out (58).

[Note—When camphor is in its raw state, it is white and its presence is felt immediately by its strong smell; it is volatile, easily catches fire and burns rapidly, giving a lot of smoke and light. This situation symbolises an ordinary living creature. His body is attractive, it emits a body odour, he is emotionally and bodily restless, and he is easily aroused and becomes angry. On the contrary, burnt-out camphor has none of these qualities. So the ascetic who had burnt all his sense of pride and ego (called Ahankar) which symbolically burns his body has nothing of worldly qualities left in him. Besides this, a piece of burnt-out camphor is of no use to anyone. Similarly, an ascetic who has burnt all his worldly ties is of no good to others, thereby freeing him of disturbances created by them. Prior to its burning, the physical piece of camphor could be seen, smelt, tasted and touched, but when it is lit it burns and vanishes into oblivion, leaving no trace behind.

Similarly, the ascetic uses Yoga and its stupendous energy to burn himself up and merge his elements with their primary cosmic forms, leaving no trace of his 'self' after death. Even while he is alive he is deemed to be non-existent because the gross body which lives in this world is not his 'true self', for the latter is his Atma which gradually vanishes into the cosmic Atma or the Supreme Self just like a piece of camphor that gradually starts to reduce in size and shape and ultimately vanish into thin air even though it is not lighted.]

59. The Chitta (the sub-conscious, the conscience and the subtle aspect of mind) is invariably attached to the Pran (the vital spark of life that sustains consciousness in the living creature's gross body)¹.

Similarly, the Mana (mind and the subtle aspects of the heart; the thoughts and emotions) of a creature has bound the latter in fetters like a bird tied with a strong string or cord² (59).

[Note--¹This is because only as long as there is life inside the body would it think and feel anything. As soon as the Pran leaves the body, such as at the time of death, the body stops to feel any sensations, and in spite of all the organs present in it as they were before death, it would be un-conscious. It cannot think, it cannot see, not hear, nor taste, nor speak etc. In short, the Chitta ceases to function.

²The Mana is attached to the gross material world because it appears so very attractive and charming for the senses. The enchanting world offers a chance for the Mana of the creature to satisfy his yearning for self gratification. The body would rather enjoy the sense objects of the world than to suffer hardships which renunciation and other spiritual paths demand of it. The Mana would never let the creature believe that the world is false and the body is perishable. Instead, it makes the creature live in a make-believe world of magical charms, creating an illusion of immense joys and happiness in this involvement. So it is metaphorically said that the Mana has tied the creature like a bird tied with a string, preventing the pure 'self' to detach itself from the world and get freedom from its falsehoods and illusionary charms by following the rigorous path of Gyan and Yoga.]

60. The Mana cannot be controlled or reined in so easily by any method, no matter how much thought is given to do so. The only way to subdue or conquer the Mana is to exercise control over the Pran factor; there is no other way (60).

[Note—When an ascetic has been able to exercise control over his sense organs and natural urges by rigorously following the tenets of Yoga and Gyan, it is only then that he is automatically able to control his Mana (the thoughts of his mind and the emotional impulses of his sentimental heart). If he remains a serf of his senses and remains engrossed in appeasing them at all costs, then the control of the Mana is out of question for him. The control of Pran is equivalent to exercising rigorous self-control or self-restraint because controlling of the Pran or the vital winds is possible only through the process of Pranayam which are breath controlling exercises that involve strict control over the body and its external organs of perception and action. In other words, 'controlling the Pran' is a metaphoric way of saying 'controlling the self'.]

61. Oh Vidhe (the one who established the codes and laws of conduct for the creation; Brahma the creator)! This Mana cannot be controlled or reined in by logics, debates, reasoning, the web created by scriptures, various magical charms, tactics, maneuverings, skill and other devices. It can be done only by the well established and proved method of

Yoga. [This is because Yoga gives direct and practical guidelines of how to control the body and its sense organs, thereby setting the stage for controlling of the Mana.] (61).

62. If one is not aware of how to truly control the Prans (the vital winds present in the body) and embarks on doing Yoga, then he is subjected to great miseries, tribulations, sufferings, distress, pain, frustration and ultimate failure due to his half-baked knowledge of how to do Yoga successfully and in a holistic manner¹ (62).

[Note—¹It should be observed here that mere physical control of breath by claspings the nostrils is not the aim of Yoga or the meaning of controlling the Prans, and this fact would be amply clear in the next verse. As far as the physical exercise of controlling of breath is concerned, nearly all the Upanishads that deal with Yoga and its physical aspect consisting of various exercises describe elaborate methods of controlling it. One such universally acknowledged and well known method is called 'Pranayam' whereby the breath is controlled by a series of steps divided into three basic units—Purak referring to inhalation, Kumbhak referring to holding of the inhaled breath, and Rechak referring to exhalation.]

63. Those who try to gain true control over the vital air element (called the Pran) by merely relying upon physical exercises (such as Pranayam) and hope to attain the stupendous glories and spiritual powers available to real Yogis (i.e. acclaimed and self-realised ascetics) through this method are as foolish as someone who is trying to cross a great ocean sitting atop a mud pitcher which is half-baked (63).

[Note—This verse implies that proper knowledge of the philosophy of Yoga, a clear and holistic understanding of its objectives and its real spiritual benefits of providing liberation and deliverance, is very essential to an aspiring ascetic and must be properly understood by him in a comprehensive manner before he starts on this journey. Earlier also it has been emphasised that Gyan, true knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment, is an important tool for success in Yoga. This Gyan not only means knowledge of the various steps in the physical exercises of Yoga, but more importantly about the deep and far-reaching metaphysical imports of each tenet of Yoga and how the physical exercises can be related to these tenets so as to pave the way for the practitioner's spiritual emancipation and salvation. Physical exercises would give him certain super human powers, such as the various Siddhis which would entitle him to lift himself from the ground and float in the sky, assume any form he wishes, go wherever he wishes without any hindrance, become invisible and enter any body he desires, but these are mere magical charms and gains of Yoga limited to this gross world. They would not relieve his soul from the horrors of the cycle of birth and death. The latter should be the main objective of doing Yoga, the main purpose for which one has embarked on this arduous journey in the first place. Unless the ultimate goal is achieved and the objective fulfilled, the entire exercise is futile. Both Gyan and Yoga are complimentary to each other—'Gyan' enlightens the aspirant about his goal and the correct path to be followed to reach it and 'Yoga' actually helps him to go there. Gyan is empowerment through knowledge and wisdom, while Yoga is its implementation.]

64. Even if the ascetic is successful in controlling his Prans (his vital winds, by the virtue of doing various Yoga exercises such as Pranayam), he still finds it hard to control his Chitta (i.e. his sub-conscious mind which is regarded as his second inner self after the Mana, the subtle mind). As a result, the Chitta never allows him to become free from taints, faults and impurities that cast their dark shadow on him (64).

65. Oh Padmaj (one born from a lotus; a reference to Brahma the creator)! It is only when the inner self and its sub-conscious is cleansed of all its blemishes, faults and impurities that taint them and act as a veil eclipsing the inherent illumination emanating from the self-illuminated pure consciousness called the Atma that its brilliant splendour and glory shines through. It is the 'light' which comes from self-realisation; it is the light of enlightenment called the 'light of Gyan' or the illumination provided by knowledge and self-awakening that is called 'enlightenment and self-realisation'. This makes the Yogi a true 'Gyani'—i.e. the ascetic who has acquired true wisdom, erudition and knowledge of the reality and the ultimate Truth, who has become enlightened about the real aim and purpose of doing Yoga in the first place is the one who is entitled to be called a truly attained and realised Yogi, a wise, self-realised and enlightened ascetic.

This spiritual attainment and realisation of the Truth and Reality is only possible on the strength of Yoga (65).

[Note—This verse emphasises two basic points—one, that true and real benefit of Yoga is obtained by taking the help of Gyan because the latter not only shows one the path to be followed but guides him along, and two, that true Gyan can be obtained by following the correct path of Yoga because the latter leads to self-realisation and tapping one's inherent spiritual strengths. They complement and supplement each other and act like two strong legs of a man which helps him walk steadily to reach his goal without stumbling and falling over midway. Refer also verse no. 12-15 of this Canto 1.]

66. Hence, a sincere spiritual aspirant should diligently practice Yoga with resilience. Those seeking Moksha (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) should practice the control of Pran (i.e. they should practice control of the sense organs of the body by controlling the vital forces of life called the Pran; they should learn self restraint).

[This verse can be read as follows—those spiritual aspirants who seek Moksha should learn to control their Pran by constant and diligent practice of Yoga.] (66).

67. Yoga is the best auspicious thing to do for a spiritual aspirant. Yoga is Shiva personified (i.e. Yoga is an embodiment of all the glorious virtues that Shiva stands for, for instance beauty, auspiciousness, truthfulness, holiness, renunciation and enlightenment of the highest order).

It is the finest path of spiritualism and it helps one to realise one's spiritual powers and obtain one's objectives. There is nothing better than it (67).

68. Yoga makes it possible to establish a union of the two apparently opposite forces in creation which are otherwise irreconcilable, such as for example it can forge a union between the Pran (the breath which remains restricted to the upper part of the body and has a tendency to move upwards and escape through the nostrils) and the Apaana (the vital wind which moves downwards in the intestines and escapes through the anus)¹, between the various Dhaatus (elements) of the body (of which there are five primary elements, seventeen and twenty three secondary elements which would depend upon the system of classification adopted, nine tertiary elements, and finally the seven structural elements)².

It helps metaphorically to establish the union between the moon and the sun. [That is, it has the stupendous ability to bring together and establish a bondage or union

between two such opposite forces of Nature as the moon and the sun, the former being an epitome of the eclectic virtues of remaining cool, calm and soothing while the other symbolises the dynamism displayed by the natural forces of creation such as energy, heat and fire. The moon is cool while the sun is blazingly hot; the moon shines in the night while the sun shines in the day. It is unimaginable to think that they can co-exist. But Yoga is so powerful that it can bring this about in a symbolic manner in order to effect a neutral state of existence when these two opposite forces of Nature cancel each other out.]

Therefore Yoga, with its majestic powers and astounding potentials, is the well chosen and correct instrument that can actually bring about a union between the creature's individual Atma, his 'self', and the Parmatma, the cosmic and supreme 'Self'.

[Yoga can perform this seemingly impossible task of bringing together the individual creature called the Jiva-Atma and the supreme transcendental Brahm called the Parmatma because it has this stupendous potential and astounding powers to effect this union. This has been symbolically emphasised by saying that it can bring the moon and the sun together; it can unite the Pran and the Apaana.] (68).

[Note—¹The Pran wind is present in the upper part of the body, while the Apaana wind is located in the lower half. The former is upwardly mobile while the latter is downwards mobile. From all practical point, the chances of their ever coming together are almost negligible. But the practice of various exercises of Yoga makes this actually feasible and possible, thereby establishing its claim to bring about the union of the Jiva-Atma and the Parmatma.

² The gross body can be studied at various levels depending upon the classification used to study its constitution and structure. The structural elements are variously called the Bhuts, the Dhaatus and the Tattvas.

(a) The *Primary level* of the elements—This consists of the five primary elements called the 'Pancha Mahabhuts'. They were formed at the beginning of creation, and consist of earth, water or fluid, fire or energy, air or wind and sky or space elements in increasing degree of subtlety.

They can be studied at two levels—one at the very core level, and the other at the more general level.

(a) (i) The study of the body at the core level of the five Bhuts consisting of the five primary elements consisting of the sky or space, air or wind, fire or energy, water or fluids, and earth. Refer verse nos. 1-2, and 5-6 of Shaarirako-panishad. Briefly, the earth element formed the solid part of the body, the water element formed the fluid part, the fire element formed the warmth and heat of the body, the movement of the body is revelation of the air element, and the subtle space between various organs and tissues of the body, both at the external as well as internal levels, is the sky element.

(a) (ii) The next level would be the various Koshas or Sheaths that are made of a combination of these five elements. They are the following—Anna Maye Kosh (the food sheath), Pran Maye Kosh (the vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mind sheath), Vigyan Maye Kosh (the intellect sheath), and Anand Maye Kosh (the bliss sheath). These Koshas are also like the elements or units that decide the complexities of the creature's body and its position in the hierarchy of evolution.

All the living organisms can be classified into the following five types depending upon the number of Koshas they have—(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kosha, the Anna Maye Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swedaj—they are those which are born from

dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Koshas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Koshas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kosh refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jaruyuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Koshas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. The last Kosh refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Koshas. Besides the four Koshas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.

(b) The *secondary level* of study of the body and its structure would be at the level of the Tattvas. It consists of the Linga Deha made up of the seventeen Tattvas which are seventeen dimensions or units or elements that constitute it—the five organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin) + the five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + the five Prans (the five subtle forms of the vital winds present inside the body—such as Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyana and Udaana) + one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) = seventeen units or elements of creation at the micro level. [Reference Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 16.]

The gross body can be further classified as consisting of twenty three elements. They are the following—

(1) The five gross organs of perception present in the body such as the ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose make up the five gross units or elements of creation at the micro level of the body of the creature. [Total 5 organs of perception.]

(2) Then there are the five organs of action such as the anus, genital, hand, leg and speech (mouth). These are the five gross organs which add their count to the number of elements or units or dimensions that exist in this creation at the micro level. [Total 5 organs of action.]

(3) Besides these, there are the five subtle sense perceptions such as the perceptions of hearing (relevant to the ear), feeling or touching (relevant to the skin), seeing various forms and shapes (relevant to the eye and the faculty of sight), taste (relevant to the tongue) and smell (relevant to the nose). [Total 5 senses of perception.]

(4) The eight Vikaars such as one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (pride and arrogance) + one Akash element + one air element + one fire element + one water element + one earth element = total of eight elements that cast their shadow on the purity of Nature (just like the shadow of the earth casts its shadow on the bright moon to result in the lunar eclipse). These elements are called the eight 'Vikaars' (literally meaning faults, errors, shortcomings or imperfections) that are present in Nature and affect the basic nature of all living beings.

Thus the tally comes to twenty three elements of creation as follows—5 organs of perceptions + 5 organs of action + 5 senses of perceptions + 8 Vikaars = total 23. [Reference Shaairako-panishad, verse no. 17-19.]

(c) The next level of study of the body is the *tertiary level*. The tertiary elements that constitute the body all living beings would be the following nine—the three Gunas such as the Sata which the best quality in creation, the Raja which is the medium quality, and the Tama which is the lowest quality (refer Shaairako-panishad, verse nos. 7-13), and the six aspects of Anatahakaran which is the inner self of the creature consisting of the sub-conscious or conscience that governs his innate character. The five aspects of Anthahakaran are the following (1) Mana or mind, (2) Buddhi or intellect, (3) Chitta or the faculty of concentration and memory; knowledge and consciousness, (4) Ahankar or ego, pride, arrogance, (5) Vrittis or inherent character, traits, habits, inclinations and temperaments of a creature based on these basic components of the subtle body—refer Paingalo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 3), and (6) the various Vasanas (worldly passions, lusts and yearnings—Muktiko-panishad, Canto 2). The total comes to $3 + 6 = 9$. These nine decide the inherent character and basic nature and temperament of the creature.

(d) The 7 Dhaatus—The structural features of the gross physical body consists of the so-called seven *Dhaatus*. These stand for the structural constituent of the body which supports and sustains its existence. According to ancient Indian system of medicine, they are the following—(1) Rasa (lymph and mucous; sap), (2) Rakta (blood), (3) Maansa (flesh), (4) Meda (fat and muscles), (5) Ashthi (bones and cartilage), (6) Meja (marrow), and (7) Shukra (semen).

According to other interpretations, these seven Dhaatus which form the structural features of the gross body and give it its shape and support it are the following—(1) all forms of fluid ingredients such as blood, urine, mucous, lymph etc, (2) bone and cartilage, (3) marrow, (4) flesh, fat and muscles, (5) abdominal organs such as stomach etc, (6) skin, and (7) Naadis (arteries, veins, capillaries and nerves).

(e) The structure of the body as explained in the Upanishads can be easily understood when we analyse it in the context of modern science of chemistry. This gross body of a creature can be compared to the molecular structure of any chemical substance or any thing in this world for that matter that is made up of certain basic elements. The molecules are also not visible to the naked eye just like the ingredients of the body mentioned above except some of them such as the skin and mucous much like the external features of the finished chemical product.

At the next level comes the atomic structure, or the subtle level of constitution of the body. It is like the atoms of any chemical molecule that make up the basic building blocks or units of that molecule. For example, Benzene has a hexagonal structure which would be like the gross structure of the creature's body called the Dhaatu, while the Carbon and Hydrogen atoms (C_6H_6) that go in to form the basic and fundamental ingredients of Benzene are like its subtle structure called the Bhut.

To understand how one element can transform itself into so many forms, we can take the example of isomerism in chemistry. The word 'iso' means the 'same', and 'meros' means 'parts'. Hence, isomerism refers to the phenomenon whereby two or more compounds that are composed of the same chemical formulae, i.e. they have the same molecular composition but different three dimensional structures; they differ in physical or chemical properties. Such things are called 'isomers' of the principal element.

Extended further, this phenomenon of isomerism would apply to the concept of the same Atma residing in all the living beings having a mind boggling variety of physical structures, besides the fact that all the creatures have the same Atma as well as the same basic elements as their essential identity.

Then there are two types of isomerism—i.e. structural isomerism and stereo isomerism. The concept of structural isomerism refer to those isomers which have the same molecular formulae but different structural arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms around the central atom or ion called Structural Isomers and this phenomenon is called structural isomerism. This would be like different species of living organisms which have the same Atma at the core, the same set of fundamental five elements set up around this basic core, and then comes the arrangements of secondary elements around this basic core to give rise to varying structural variations in the species as they evolved.

Stereo isomerism is when the same molecular formulae represents two or more compounds which differ in the spatial arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms. Such compounds are called Stereo Isomers. In this case, we deal with one given species such as the human species which have all the gross features the same but the internal geometric patterns in which the secondary and tertiary elements exist determine the individuality of a particular man and sets him aside from all others of his ilk.

A related concept is isomorphism wherein there is apparent similarity of form between individuals belonging to different races or species. In the field of chemistry it refers to the existence of two or more chemical compounds with the same crystal structure; they differ in chemical composition but have the same crystalline structure. This would be like speaking of the entire human race, or of all the mammals for instance who would exhibit similar external features but have different internal chemistry in the sense that all have their own set of characteristic qualities, virtues and values, their own independent personality, intelligence, emotional quotient etc. Their mental and intellectual setup, their emotional and sentimental quotient, their inherent natural temperaments and inclinations etc. would differ from one individual to another depending upon the combination in which the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) exist in them.

In this context, the three Gunas that determine the individual character of the creature, that determine his 'individuality' as compared to the general character of the group to which that individual belongs, are like the isotopes in chemistry. The isotope refers to the phenomenon wherein one of two or more atoms of the same chemical element that contain the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons in their nuclei and therefore have the same atomic number and chemical properties but different mass numbers and physical properties. For example, two brothers have the same genes and the same inheritance, but the presence of the three Gunas in different ratios between them changes their personality and thought processes. One may be a highly righteous man while the other might be just the opposite. Their parents are the same, their upbringing is the same, they have attended the same school and ate the same food, but there is a deep chasm when it comes to their character as individuals.

Refer to verse no. 40, 56 and 147 of this Canto no. 1 in this context.]

69. In other words, merger and mutual nullifying of all the opposite natural forces and qualities in creation so as to bring about a state of non-duality marked by exemplary neutrality, homogeneity, uniformity, universality and equanimity of the highest order and of the purest form is the purpose of Yoga.

Now I shall preach you about the eclectic knowledge which is called 'Yog Shikha'¹ (69).

[Note—¹The word Yog Shikha refers to the pinnacle of spiritual achievement obtained by following the great tenets of meditation and contemplation. The word 'Shikha' means the tip or apex, while the word 'Yoga' means meditation and contemplation done to bring about a union of two or more forces of Nature together—like the case of bring together of the sun and the moon cited above in verse no. 68. Yoga brings into effect the union of the

individual soul with the cosmic Soul; it forges an everlasting relationship between the micro and the macro level of existence so that the false sense of duality and distinction are eliminated and a wholesome uniformity is established. Yoga is the process by which the two sides of an equilateral triangle are extended to meet at the apex which symbolises the climax of one's spiritual endeavours.]

70. When the practitioner of Yoga sits in the Padmaasan posture (the lotus posture) or any other comfortable posture suitable to him and meditates using a Mantra (a mystical formulae consisting of syllables, letters, words or phrases), his body begins to shiver and vibrate in a subtle manner (70).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 52-54.]

71. The spiritual aspirant should sit with ease and exercise full control over his limbs (both the hands and legs). [That is, he should stop constantly fiddling with his hands and shuffling his body in a fidgety manner. He should sit absolutely quietly in a calm and composed manner.] He should withdraw his attention from wandering anywhere in the external world, and instead of allowing his sight from jumping from one object to another he should focus it on the tip of his nostrils while meditating upon the divine Mantra OM and contemplating upon its divine glories (71).

72. A wise and erudite aspirant should enshrine the transcendental Supreme Being in his own heart (as his pure conscious Atma which is self-illuminated and radiant with divine effulgence) and concentrate his attention on him through the medium of meditation and contemplation or Yoga.

He must contemplate that this body is like a majestic palace having only one pillar or foundation to support it (in the form of the one Atma or the pure conscious soul personifying the Supreme Being whom he has enshrined in his heart). [In other words, he must concentrate on the fact that his entire being represented by the gross as well as the subtle components of the body relies upon the Atma or the pure consciousness that lives inside it to not only give this body its life, strength, vigour and vitality but also its worth, significance and importance as a living entity. If this Atma is removed from the body, the latter would not even be worth its gross weight as proved by the fact that as soon as a man dies, his dead body is cremated or buried as early as possible as it begins to decay and emit a foul smell.]

This palace has nine doors¹; it has three supporting posts²; and there are five Gods who reside in this body³ (72).

[Note--¹These are the two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, and one urethra; refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, 3/18.

²These are the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama which determine the character of the creature and his qualities, or the three basic elements which determine the constitution of the body such as Pitta (bile), Kaph (mucous) and Vayu (wind).

³These Gods are the patron Gods of the five elements from which the body is made. These five elements and their Gods have been enumerated in Yogtattva Upanishad as follows—(a) Brahma the creator is the patron God of the earth element (verse no. 85-86); (b) Vishnu the sustainer is the patron God of the water element (verse no. 88-89); (c) Rudra, the angry form of Shiva the concluder, is the patron God of the fire element (verse no. 91-93); (d) Ishwar who is the mouth of the entire creation in his macrocosmic all-encompassing and all-pervading form of the air element without which no life is

sustainable in this living world is the sustainer and the patron God of the air element (verse no. 95-97); and (e) Lord Shiva called Mahadev, the great God, is the patron God of the sky element (verse no. 98-99).

Refer also to Canto 1, verse no. 165 and to Canto 5, verse no. 2 in this context.]

73. During the time one is doing meditation, he should not pay any attention to the body, but instead concentrate his attention on the illumination emanating from inside his body from an ethereal, divine and holy entity whose rays of light resemble that of the radiant sun. [This sublime and subtle entity is the pure conscious Atma residing in the subtle space of the heart and shines with its own illumination just like the celestial sun does in the sky.] (73).

74. The aspirant should contemplate upon this splendidous subtle form of the sun and focus his attention on the fiercely burning fire in its center. This fire is like the flame on the tip of the wick of a burning oil lamp. This divine vision is the vision of the supreme Parmeshwar, the Supreme Being revealed in the inner self of the aspirant (74).

[Note—The sun is a metaphor for the splendidous Atma residing as the pure consciousness inside the individual creature, and this Atma is as glorious, radiant and splendidous as the sun. In metaphysics, the celestial sun is invariably regarded as a manifestation of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic revelation of the Supreme Being known as Brahm. The sun is the only celestial body in the sky which provides 'light' to the entire world—another way of saying that the sun infuses life, energy and vitality into this creation so much so that existence sans the sun is not imaginable. This fact is employed here to draw a parallel between the Atma and the sun because without the Atma the body is a dead entity much like the world which would be dead without the sun; it is the Atma as the pure consciousness that 'lights' up the inner self of all living beings much like the sun that lights up the external world for him.]

75. Progressing further in his meditation, the aspirant goes beyond this splendour of the subtle sun. He submits himself to the Supreme Being through the second opening (end) of the Sushumna Naadi¹ (75).

[Note—¹This Sushumna Naadi is the tubular duct passing through the center of the spinal cord, with its lower end blocking the mouth of the Kundalini, the coiled subtle energy center lying at the base of the spinal cord, and the upper end opening out through the Brahm Randhra, the hair-like slit on the top of the skull. It is believed that an expert practitioner of Yoga is able to divert all his vital life forces through this Kundalini into this Sushumna Naadi, push them upwards right up to the Brahm Randhra, and then finally make his exit from the body by rupturing this area of the skull. This is his final liberation—or 'Kaivalya Mukti'. His Pran winds merge inseparably and eternally with the air element present outside the body in the cosmos, never to re-enter the body again, while the latter would soon disintegrate into the primary elements from which it was formed in the beginning, i.e. into the earth, water, fire, air and sky element. This is called 'Videha Mukti' because it is obtained by discarding the gross body, and since it is the only one of its kind in the sense that reversion to the gross body is not possible even if one wants, it is also called 'Kaivalya Mukti'.

The phrase 'submit himself to the Supreme Being' means to have a divine glimpse of Brahm who is said to have his abode in the area of the head around the Brahm Randhra. This is a symbolic depiction of the fact that Brahm stands for intelligence, thoughts, erudition, sagacity, enlightenment and wisdom which are the functions of the brain

located in the head. It ought to be noted here that the Atma, the conscious soul, has its abode in the subtle space of the heart, the place designated as the center for such eclectic virtues as compassion, mercy and kindness. This is also the location of the symbolic lotus present in the subtle heart where the Atma lives.]

76. By rupturing the suture in the skull, known as the Brahm Randhra, a successful practitioner of Yoga is able to have a divine glimpse of the supreme Pada, i.e. he is able to have a holy vision of the grand abode of the Supreme Being.

If unfortunately an ascetic becomes lazy or careless in his spiritual pursuit, or he becomes over confident of himself, he would not be able to have this divine vision or any tangible success in his efforts (76).

77. An aspirant is able to get the full auspicious benefits of doing Yoga if and when he successfully adheres to its strict tenets and obeys all its doctrines diligently and resiliently in all the three phases of time¹. That is, when he constantly practices Yoga sincerely and steadfastly without any negligence and callousness on his part, it is only then that he is entitled to reap its full benefits; otherwise not.

I (Shiva) have narrated this Yoga to you (Brahma) in brief (77).

[Note—¹The three phases of time when he is expected to be vigilant in doing Yoga are the following—(a) when he is a young adult, during his middle ages and during his old age—i.e. throughout his life; (b) during the three points of the day called the three Sandhyas, i.e. at dawn, at noon and at dusk; (c) the three points of time measured on a larger scale such as the past, the present and the future.

In other words, an expert ascetic is expected to be vigilant in doing Yoga, or constantly observing the strict tenets of meditation and contemplation no matter what time or phase of life he is passing through. For a wise ascetic, each moment is to be spent in doing Yoga for each passing moment is as precious as the one gone by and the one coming ahead. Not a second of life is to be wasted.]

78. When he is able to harness the stupendous powers and astounding spiritual strength inherent in Yoga, when he is empowered with Yoga's mystical and majestic powers after numerous births (or after a long period of time and prolonged and sustained practice)—it is then that all his sins and their evil consequences are destroyed; it is then that he is able to happily realise the quintessential knowledge of the ubiquitous supreme Ishwar, the Supreme Being called Brahm (78).

[Note—Yoga helps him to realise his own true 'self' and its stupendous glories and powers. It is already mentioned in verse no. 72 above that the primary condition for meditation and contemplation is to visualise that the Supreme Being is enshrined in one's subtle heart, and verse no. 71 says that he must use the Mantra OM for the purpose of it. This OM is a word symbol of Brahm, incorporating in its ambit the entire gamut of creation right from its beginning through its development and culminating in its conclusion, only to restart the cycle again.]

79. When the above becomes a reality, it is said the ascetic has become a 'Siddha', i.e. his efforts to do Yoga have borne fruits for him and he has successfully accomplished it; he is rewarded by numerous spiritual and mystical powers collectively called the various 'Siddhis'. All his worldly fetters are broken and he is able to pierce through this hardened shell known as the world and find his true and final liberation and deliverance (much like

a chick emerging from inside the shell of the egg to find freedom from the hellish and suffocating confines of the egg shell).

Now I (Shiva) shall narrate the process of doing Yoga (i.e. the exercises of Yoga) (79).

80. Only a person who has successfully been able to exercise control over his own two vital winds called Pran (breath) and Apaana (the vital wind that moves down in the intestines), i.e. one who is a successful practitioner of Yoga himself, should be made a guide and teacher of Yoga. [Obviously, this is a very practical advice because Yoga relies more on practice than mere philosophical understanding of metaphysical and spiritual concepts. It involves complicated postures and exercises, and for this an expert hand is needed to guide a new comer. If Yoga exercises are not done under proper guidance, they are very dangerous for the ascetic for they might result in serious injuries to the body. A person who does not know the pitfalls and the intricacies of Yoga, who is not well versed in the intricate detailed process of various steps involved in numerous Yoga exercises would be more dangerous if chosen as a guide than not doing Yoga at all.]

The aspirant should first obtain the Guru's (teacher's) blessings by serving him devotedly. [When the teacher is pleased with his disciple, the former would feel a sense of affection and have a moral obligation towards the latter, and would then be more sincere and willing to impart him full knowledge like he would be doing to his own son. Otherwise, the whole exercise would lack sincerity and commitment.]

The aspirant should now prepare to conquer the Prans (vital winds) himself (under the guidance of the teacher) (80).

81. The area of the body where the focus of his attention should be fixed has a length measuring twelve fingers-width, and breadth measuring four fingers-width. It is soft, supple and delicate, and white or grey in colour (81).

82. By carefully learning the process of activating the vital energies trapped inside the body from the wise and erudite Guru (teacher of Yoga), the aspirant should diligently make relevant efforts to control the vital winds forcefully (because the wind is an element that does not want to any harness to be put on it and so it is an uphill and arduous task to bridle it. The wind is like a wild horse that is very difficult to tame and control.

The Kundalini is a coiled subtle energy center having three and a half loops in the coil. It becomes straightened as a result of the process mentioned here (by which the vital winds are controlled and the latent energies are activated). [This process releases the trapped energy in the Kundalini.] (82).

83. The anus should be constricted (so that the Apaana wind does not escape through it during the pressure to be exerted for activating and straightening of the Kundalini) and the Kundalini should be jerked so that it is aroused from its dormant, hibernating or sleeping mode, and instead coaxed and activated¹.

If the aspirant is successful in doing so, i.e. if he is able to activate the Kundalini and harness its stupendous treasury of cosmic dynamic energy that lies latent in it in a dormant form, he is able to symbolically conquer death; he would have no fear from death. [This is because for one, he would have all his organs under his control, his body

would be very healthy and toned up, he would not have to suffer from numerous ailments that afflict the body and which cause insurmountable torments for an ordinary man, and secondly, should he decide to finally discard the body and free himself from its limitations he would easily channelise all his vital winds up through the Sushumna Naadi with the aid of energy provided by the Kundalini and make his painless exit by rupturing the Brahm Randhra at the top of the head. He would not have to suffer the normal horrors of a declining body and the final moments of death.] (83).

[Note—¹This phenomenon is like uncoiling a hose pipe full of very cold water during winters. The water and the pipe have been lying under frigid conditions for a long time and the pipe needs some amount of warming and vigorous shaking to uncoil it, soften it up and remove its rigidity, make it flexible so that its water content is released and it begins to flow again.

In the present case, the Kundalini is the subtle energy center that traps the dynamic energy of creation in the body of the individual. It is located at the lower end of the spine. Its mouth is closed by the Sushumna Naadi. The Kundalini is compared to a serpent whose mouth is shut by this Naadi. When the serpent is shaken and jerked into life, the hot breath of it would melt the clogging wax in its mouth and release the venomous gases trapped in this snake's elongated body. When the anus is shut tight, the heat in the lower bowls and abdomen create sufficient energy that would unclog the Kundalini and melt the wax sealing its mouth, thereby releasing its hitherto trapped energy which would then snake up the only opening available to it, i.e. the tubular Sushumna Naadi—see verse no. 86 of this Canto below. This released energy snakes up through this Naadi and reaches the other end of it at the top of the head (skull) in the area of the Brahm Randhra (the cranium).

The process of activating the Kundalini has been elaborately described in the book 'The Serpent Power' by Arthur Avalon & Sir John Woodroffe.

According to the Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 36 of Sam Veda tradition, the energy of the Kundalini is located above/at the top of the 'Kanda' in the form of a coil having eight spirals. It covers the mouth of 'Brahma Dwar' (literally, the doorway leading to Brahma). It remains ever present, but dormant, in that place.

The Dyanbindu Upanishad, verse no. 69 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes how to activate and ignite the latent cosmic energy present in the Kundalini. This verse is quoted here—"The person desirous of activating the Kundalini and releasing its subtle energy for his spiritual benefit as well as to empower him with great mystical and occult powers should sit steadily in the Padmasan posture. The palms of the two hands are placed one on the top of the other, face upwards and put on the heels of the two legs (which have already been folded in from the knee joint in such a way that the heels are just opposite the navel, the sole is pointed upwards and inwards towards the body, and the toes of the leg of left side rest on the thigh of the right side and of the right leg on the thigh of the left side). The chin is drawn in and held tightly near the pit of the throat below the Adam's apple.

While sitting in this posture, the practitioner should focus his mind on the patron deity of the ascetic, usually on Lord Shiva who is the supreme Brahm as manifested in the form of the 'pure self'. The Apaana Vayu (i.e. the wind in the lower part of the body, especially in the lower intestines and pelvic region) is drawn or pulled upwards, while at the same time the Pran Vayu (i.e. the breath moving in the upper part of the body, especially in the nostrils and lungs) is made to divert inwards or held from escaping. [This physical exercise is very difficult and requires a lot of practice and patience. It results in mixing these two primary winds in the body. This is effectuated when the

Apaan wind is pulled up by the upwards tug of the Pran wind, and the latter is pulled down by the downwards tug of the former, resulting in a balancing effect.]

The net result of this exercise is that the practitioner is able to experience the astounding potentials of the released powers of the trapped subtle cosmic energy that was hitherto lying dormant in a hibernating state in the Kundalini. [When the two winds cross each other's path, they create enough force that shakes the Kundalini and unplugs its mouth to release the energy trapped inside its coils. This is like doing physical exercises in a gymnasium to unfold rigid muscles and tone them up.] (69).

The benefits of activating the Kundalini and the process do so have been succinctly described in Krishna Yajur Veda's Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 81-84.

An entire Upanishad called the Yog Kundali Upanishad belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition is dedicated to this theme of activating the Kundalini.]

84. This is a very esoteric and secret knowledge that I have divulged to you in brief. One should sit in the Vajra Aasan¹ and constrict the upper part of the body. [That is, he should control the Pran or breath from escaping like the Apaan wind was restricted by closing the anus in verse no. 83 above.] (84).

[Note—¹The *Vajra Aasan* is the following—the body is curved or arched backwards like a bow in such a way that the head touches the upturned soles of the feet. To give effect to this Aasan, one should sit on the ground with the two legs bent backwards from the knee and the soles pointing upwards behind the buttocks. The upper part of the body is slowly bent backwards until the rear of the head touches the upturned soles from behind. This posture is called Vajra after the weapon of the same name held by Indra, the king of Gods, which gives him invincibility in the entire creation. In other words, the practitioner of Vajra Aasan too acquires such great powers that he too becomes invincible and infallible. Refer Yog Kundali Upanishad, verse no. 6 in this context.]

85. The fire needs air to remain kindled, and that is why when one is able to control and harness the vital winds and concentrate their energy on the Kundalini, the dynamic energy present in a subtle form in the latter remains perpetually active; it is not allowed to subside and get doused; it is not allowed to flicker and die away.

The Kundalini has immense dynamic energy trapped inside it. The intensity of it is so powerful that it can effectively conquer all the three worlds (in a symbolic manner)¹ (85).

[Note--¹Here the term *conquering of the three worlds* have two connotations—(a) The three states in which the consciousness exists—i.e. the waking state called the Jagrat, the dreaming state called the Swapna, and deep sleep state called the Sushupta. This happens for the following reasons. (i) By controlling his sense organs during the waking state of consciousness, he has literally vanquished the material world which is the focus of attention of these organs; this world no longer disturbs him. (ii) Next, since he has controlled the mind and its sub-conscious, he remains free from their influence during the dreaming state. Since the dreams are the result of the sub-conscious mind at work and the latter has already been conquered, there is no question of his mind creating a world of dreams which he would not like to exist, or which is not according to his temperament and inherent nature. The mind would not dream dreams that the ascetic would not like to dream of. In other words, he has controlled the wayward mind and through it his dreams, because dreams are the playfield of the mind and the sub-conscious. (iii) When he has been able to conquer the first two states and crossed into the third state of consciousness, called the deep sleep state, both the gross body and the subtle mind are non-existent; they have no role to play now. But under ordinary circumstances, this state is very temporary

for the man in a deep sleep state reverts back to the earlier two stages when the time comes for him to wake up to the realities of this material world where he lives. When it happens, the temporary bliss that he had obtained during the deep sleep state vanishes in thin air. But in the case of a realised and expert ascetic this does not happen for he remains perpetually in a state of bliss, ecstasy and oblivion, unconcerned with this artificial world of material objects driven by the mind and the intellect on the one hand, and by the sense organs of the body on the other hand. In other words, he has crossed this third state of Sushupta, which is transient, by conquering it to proceed to the fourth state called Turiya, a state of bliss, ecstasy and happiness that is perpetual.

This is a metaphoric way of saying that an ascetic who is able to harness the energy of the Kunkalini by practicing Yoga has conquered the three worlds by not only controlling himself in his waking state by self restraint of his sense organs, but also controlling his world of dreams by controlling the sub-conscious mind, and then the higher existential state of consciousness called deep sleep. That is, he is in total control of his self and is like an emperor who is invincible for his enemies, the latter being the uncountable worldly detractions and inherent faults of character created by various Gunas that tend to mar his spiritual progress.

(b) The other interpretation of the term ‘three worlds’ refer to the stupendous mystical powers called the Siddhis (of which there are eight in number) that he gets by being successful in Yoga. Armed with these Siddhis, he can perform super-human tasks and achieve success in doing things that a normal emperor’s army is unable to do. He can go anywhere he likes in the three worlds consisting of the terrestrial world where humans live, the nether world where subterranean creatures live, and the celestial world of Gods and Spirits. He can assume any form there, defeat even the strongest of enemies and the fiercest of animals, and even defeat death itself which is otherwise undefeatable. (Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 51, 73-75, 59-60 in this context which explicitly state this fact.)]

86. When the subtle energy of the Kundalini is stoked by the concentrated vital winds present inside the body (by doing various Aasans and as described in verse nos. 82-84), it rises up and snakes up the Sushumna Naadi. [This Naadi is the tubular duct whose lower end opens into the mouth of the Kundalini. So when the mouth is unclogged by heating the Kundalini by Apaan wind, the energy thus released naturally would enter this tubular duct.]

It is metaphorically said that it has entered the Chandra Mandal, i.e. the realm of the moon because the entrance of the vital winds and the energy into the Sushumna Naadi causes a sense of titillation and ecstasy for the ascetic. Such emotional feelings as titillation, joyfulness, ecstasy, exhilaration, elation and exultation are associated with the Moon God.

It is said that now it pierces through the Brahm Granthi¹ (86).

[Note—¹The word *Granthi* means a knot. It also refers to the ganglions that help to coordinate the different nerves just like major junction boxes in the network of electric wires in a building. The word Granthi also refers to the glands that control all the major nerves and veins in the body. Just like a knot binds something, these Granthis of the body bind the subtle energy present in the body from being released. If we treat them as representing the ganglions then it means that by the process of Yoga in which the subtle energy of the Kundalini is released in the spinal cord, or the Sushumna Naadi to be precise, these hitherto clogged and inactive ganglions are reactivated and they begin to function in prime shape. If we consider them as glands then it would mean that the functioning of these glands is restored and this in turn helps the body to work properly.]

The Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 70-71 describes the three main Granthis where these three Gods have their symbolic abodes in the body of the individual creature—viz. Brahm Granthi, Vishnu Granthi, and Rudra Granthi.

According to Tantra literature, there are three Granthis—viz. Brahm Granthi, Vishnu Granthi and Rudra Granthi. They obstruct the upwards movement of the energy or power of the Kundalini. Each of the six Chakras (whirling energy centers of the body) has two Granthis on either side. The Brahm Granthi is situated between the Muladhar Chakra and Swadisthan Chakra.

Refer also to Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 67-74 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which describes how the energy of the Kundalini passes through the various Granthis and reaches the top of the head.]

87. Then the energy of the Kundalini pierces through the Vishnu Granthi¹ and establishes itself in the Rudra Granthi². At this stage, the aspirant should practice the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam³ repeatedly and replenish the strength of the vital winds present inside the body. [This is made possible because the inhaled air which is rich in oxygen is first sucked in through the nostrils during the Purak phase of Pranayam. It is then allowed to stay inside the body for some time during the Khumbhak phase of Pranayam to enable it to oxidise all the tissues and remote corners of the body besides rejuvenating the vital winds of the body. The toxic gases which were earlier trapped inside the different parts of the body have been yanked out due to the heating of the body by Pranayam, activating the Kundalini and holding the Apan wind from escaping from the anus by closing the latter. These toxic gases, such as carbon dioxide etc, are then collected and exhaled during the Rechak phase of Pranayam.] (87).

[Note--¹The *Vishnu Granthi* is situated between Manipur and Anahat Chakras.

²The *Rudra Granthi* is located between Vishuddha Chakra and Agya (Gyan) Chakra. The energy or cosmic divine powers of the Kundalini has to pierce through these three knots before it can reach the Sahasraara Chakra at the top of the head.

³The word Pranayam refers to control of the breath and *Kumbhak* is the phase of Pranayam when the inhaled air is held inside the body for a certain pre-fixed time before being exhaled.]

88. The aspirant should then practice the piercing of the 'Surya Mandal' or the realm of the subtle sun in the body. By doing this successfully he finds peace, calmness and fulfillment. This is brought into effect by doing the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam four times. [This is a reference to the fact Kumbhak would have resulted in his body becoming light as all the toxic gases are by now eliminated and all the tissues are well oxidised and charged. The body feels rejuvenated and fresh. The sun is a cosmic reservoir of fire and heated gases. The Khumbhak phase of Pranayam is compared to this sun because like the latter, the body of the practitioner acts like a pitcher in which the heat is trapped along with the vital airs. This result in a virtual cauldron of fire and the body symbolically acquires the same properties as the sun—it glows radiantly, gives out a shine that forms a radiant halo around it, and it acts like a center around which all life revolves much like the planets going round the celestial sun. Even as no impurity can ever tarnish the sun, no worldly impurities and imperfections ever affect the purity of the Atma and the body of a practicing ascetic. His body is not an ordinary mortal gross body like that of ordinary people but is a divine entity empowered by spiritual strength and cosmic energy much like the sun in the sky.] (88).

[Note—Refer verse no. 73 of this present Canto 1 in this context. Refer also to Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 85-87.]

89. Having pierced through the three knots (as mentioned in verse no. 86-87) which had been acting as a millstone around his neck, tying him down and preventing the stupendous divine energy of the Kundalini from reaching the Brahm Randhra, the aspirant is now freed from all fetters and becomes eligible to attain Brahm. [That is, now he can enjoy the extreme bliss and happiness which comes with self-realisation and Brahm-realisation.]

Now I (Shiva) shall narrate the signs of such an acclaimed and realised spiritual aspirant (89).

90. A spiritual aspirant should stay in a lonely and calm place. He should eat less and concentrate his energy on spiritual pursuit, such as meditating and contemplating upon the various aspects of Pran and other metaphysical concepts which form the quintessential path that can lead him to the elixir of eternal life. It is an unmatched remedy for all the worldly ailments—both physical and spiritual—that had been tormenting him in the past (90).

91. The practitioner of Yoga should do Purak (inhalation of air/breath) through the Surya Naadi (the Pingla duct passing through the right nostril), withhold this breath inside the body according to the prescribed method of Yoga during the second phase called Kumbhak, and then do Rechak with it (i.e. exhale it) through the Chandra Naadi (the Ida duct passing through the left nostril) in the third and final phase of Yoga (91).

[Note—The three phases of Pranayam done to unfold the trapped energy of the Kundalini have been described in almost a similar fashion in Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 20-31.]

92. This form of Yoga involving the Surya Naadi (the right nostril) should be repeatedly done as it is able to eliminate a number of bodily ailments, such as those related to the stomach and abdomen as well as diseases associated with worms in the body (92).

93. In the beginning of the process, the practitioner should inhale full breath through both the nostrils and pass it down the body and press it out near the Kundalini. In other words, full breath should be inhaled so that the abdomen is filled with wind, and then the abdominal walls are to be pressed hard so that whatever trapped wind there is in the intestines is eliminated as flatus passing through the anus. [This is a sort of preliminary and preparatory stage for the next phase of Pranayam involving holding in the abdomen of the inhaled wind, or doing Kumbhak.]

Then the inhaled wind or breath that had been earlier pulled in through the Pingla Naadi (right nostril) should be held in the abdomen and finally expelled or exhaled out of the body through the Ida Naadi (the left nostril) (93).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 37-42.]

94. This exercise helps to remove the diseases associated with cough in the throat. The body's warmth is enhanced indicating the rejuvenating of the fire element present inside it. This dries up the excess water content of the Naadis, hence reducing the amount of

mucous etc. present in them and other channels of the body, such as the throat. This also helps to remove the various faults and impurities of the various essential elements of the body which are fluid in nature, such as blood, lymph, semen, the different enzymes, hormones and other such vital secretions of the many internal organs of the body. [This cure is effected by their being heated by the body's rejuvenated fire element, and the numerous faults associated with excessive presence of water inside the body such as odema etc. are also taken care of.] (94).

95. This all-powerful 'Kumbhak Pranayam', i.e. holding of the inhaled breath, can be done effectively even during walking as it can be done while sitting.

If it is done while walking, the inhalation is to be done through the mouth (by opening the mouth and taking in a big gasp of air, instead of through one of the nostrils as done during sitting Kumbhak). After holding this wind in the abdomen for a certain fixed time, the exhalation is to be done through the nose (by closing the mouth) (95).

96. This process helps to cool the body. It helps to overcome the problems caused by excessive bile (which is hot in nature) as well as hunger and thirst.

The practitioner should pump in air in his chest just like an ironsmith pumps it in his furnace where he melts the iron (96).

[Note—A close reading would show that the wind should be pulled in with full intensity through the mouth, held in the stomach for sometime and then expelled through the nose with all the strength that one can muster. Even a trial of this exercise would prove its effectiveness—it completely oxidises all the tissues of the body and it feels active and rejuvenated after this walk instead of feeling tired and fatigued. The expulsion of the wind through the nose ensures that its congestion is removed and any trace of mucous clinging to the nostrils is blown out, thereby cleansing the air duct and felicitating unhindered flow of the Pran wind in and out of the body. This verse is obviously 'Yoga in action'!]

97. Coming back to the normal mode of doing Pranayam, i.e. while sitting, one should continue to do Rechak (exhalation) and Purak (inhalation) till the time he is not tired. The inhalation is to be done through the Surya Naadi (i.e. the Pingla Naadi implying the right nostril) (97).

98. [If the inhalation is done through the Surya Naadi or the right nostril, then obviously—] The Rechak Pranayam, i.e. the exhalation of the wind, should be done through the Chadra Naadi (the Ida Naadi, implying the left nostril).

This helps to calm down the bad effects of disturbed Vaat (mucous), Pitta (bile) and Vaayu (wind) in the body. It results in enhancing the strength of the latent fire element in the body; it is kindled and stoked to remain active and warm (98).

99. This above-mentioned process helps to activate the Kundalini and remove the problems (ailments/diseases) of the mouth. It is auspicious and gives comfort to the practitioner. It clears the Brahm Naadi (the Sushumna Naadi) and eliminates the numerous diseases of the mouth such as accumulation of mucous etc. (99).

100. The 'Bhastra Kumbhak' (inhalation through the mouth and then holding the wind in the abdomen) should be done as much as possible. While doing Pranayam, the aspirant should sit comfortably and steadily in one of the Aasans (sitting postures). This helps to unravel the secret of the three Granthis of the body¹ (100).

[Note--¹In other words, by doing Pranayam properly one is able to open the knots present at strategic points in the body. These knots, called the Granthis, act like blocks that impede the free flow of energy, vital stimuli and nutrients in the body through the various Naadis (the network of various nerves and veins). Yoga exercises help the body by untying these knots, resulting in reinvigorating the body. The three Granthis have been described in verse nos. 86-87 of this Canto above.

The Bhastra Kumbha has been explained in detail in Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 32-39.]

101. Now I shall narrate about the three 'Bandhs' (closures). By practicing Pranayam that helps to do them on a daily basis, one is able to win control over the vital winds of the body (101).

[Note—Essentially this verse means that the vital winds present inside the body would escape during the practice of Pranayam if certain exit points are not closed tightly. This closing is called 'Bandh'. The various Bandhs have been described in Upanishads dealing with Yoga practices, the chief being Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition (verse no. 46-51), Dhyandindu Upanishad (verse no. 73-78^{1/2}), Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 47-52, and Yogtattva Upanishad (verse no. 112-128) of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

102. The process of Kumbhak helps the ascetic to break through or overcome all the four hurdles¹ that he faces in his spiritual endeavour, hurdles which impede his progress and create obstacles in his path to success. Kumbhak should be accompanied by practice of the three Bandhs that I (Shiva) shall describe to you (Brahma) now (102).

[Note—¹The four hurdles of Yoga are the following— Though it is not mentioned clearly what these four hurdles are, they are the following—1 gross body with its external organs of action and perception + 1 Mana or mind + 1 Buddhi or intellect + 1 Ahankar or ego, pride and a false sense of self-importance = 4.

From the perspective of Tantra philosophy, the four hurdles that Kumbhak helps the ascetic to overcome so that his Pran wind can provide him liberation and deliverance are the four 'Peeths' described in verse nos. 170-175 of this Canto 1. They are the Kaam Roop Peeth, the Purna Giri Peeth, the Jalandhar Peeth, and the Uddiyan Maha Peeth.]

103. The first is called 'Mool Bandh', the second is 'Uddiyan Bandh', and the third is called 'Jalandhar Bandh'. Their signs are as follows (in the verses narrated below) (103).

104. The anus is pressed hard by the heels of the leg, and at the same time it is constricted voluntarily using the muscles of the rectum. By repeatedly doing this, the vital wind (i.e. the Apaana Vayu) is diverted upwards. [That is, when the anus is closed, the intestinal wind called the flatus would not be able to pass down and out through it, and naturally then it would force itself in the upward direction.] (104).

105. When this is effectively done, the Pran (the wind that is located in the upper part of the body; the breath), the Apaana (the wind in the intestines that has been blocked from

passing out by blocking the escape route through the anus), the Naad (the cosmic sound that is heard when one concentrates and does meditation) and its accompanying Bindu (the dot present on the top of the symbol of Naad, symbolising the focal point in the cosmic bowl from where this sound is generated and where the mind is supposed to be focused during meditation so that Naad can be heard)—all these four are made to unite due to Mool Bandh. This exercise of Mool Bandh helps this to become a reality; the practitioner becomes an expert in uniting them by doing the Mool Bandh successfully. There is no doubt about it (105).

[Note—Refer verse no. 157 below of this Canto 1, as well as Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 46.]

106. The next Bandh is called ‘Uddiyan Bandh’. It should be done at the end of the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam but before the Rechak phase. [That is, it should be done when one prepares to exhale the wind which was held inside the body during Kumbhak.]

This helps the Pran (the vital wind force in the body, referring to the breath and other vital winds) to get established in the Sushumna Naadi (106).

107. Since this is done while the heated air is still inside the body (because it is done prior to exhalation), it helps to literally ‘lift’ the vital airs inside the Sushumna Naadi, and hence wise ascetics have given it this name ‘Uddiyan’, meaning to ‘fly or lift from the ground’. Elderly ones assert that it is easy to accomplish it (i.e. it is not as difficult as it sounds) (107).

[Note—Refer Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 47-50.]

108. One should not be lazy or careless in doing this Mool Bandh. By practicing it, even old people can become young. Effort should be made to strengthen the area around the navel with this Bandh (108).

109. By practicing this continuously for a period of six months one is able to conquer death. [That is, his body is sufficiently well tuned that it can withstand the onslaught of old age and its attending problems with great ease and resilience.]

The third Bandh is called ‘Jalandhar Bandh’. This should be done at the end of the Purak phase of Pranayam. [That is, it is to be done when the inhalation process is complete.] (109).

110. During the Jalandhar Bandh, the throat is constricted, resulting in creating of an obstruction in the path of the wind (i.e. the breath). It should be done in a determined manner by constricting the throat, and concentrating the vital wind in the region of the heart (or the upper part of the chest) (110).

111. This Jalandhar Bandh fulfills the thirst of the practitioner for Amrit, the elixir of eternity and bliss.

The throat is constricted and the wind inside is pushed downwards (111).

[Note—Refer Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 51.]

112. Around the center of the neck, this wind is made to expand and enter the Brahm Naadi located at the back of the neck. [This Brahm Naadi is the Sushumna Naadi going

up to the head through the spinal cord behind the throat, and entering the head region from the base of the skull.]

At this stage, the ascetic should sit in the Vajra Aasan (refer verse no. 84), and stir the Kundalini into activity¹ (112).

[Note--¹He should shake the Kundalini by voluntarily moving his muscles in the lower abdomen and the pelvic region. It ought to be noted here that when one has to do any strenuous exercise or make any strenuous effort, such as for example lifting a heavy weight or pulling something heavy with a rope, he has to hold his breath and tighten his abdominal muscles to prevent the flatus from escaping through the anus in order to garner sufficient strength and stamina to perform that arduous task in hand. This is a thing that anyone can experience any time. This is done almost involuntarily by the body in order to collect itself to face the ordeal in front of it. The same effect is brought about here in Yoga, but this time it is done voluntarily, forcefully and systematically.]

113. He should focus on activating the energy of the Kundalini like the ironsmith ignites his furnace by pumping air into it through the bellows¹.

This helps to pierce through all the three Granthis². It is just like the case when a red hot iron rod is pushed inside the bamboo stalk, resulting in the knots on the bamboo being burnt from the inside and a hole bored through them (113).

[Note--¹This pumping is done when all the exit routes for the vital winds have been effectively blocked by doing the three Bandh exercises—viz. the Mool Bandh, the Uddiyan Bandh and the Jalandhar Bandh. The trapped air is heated and then the Apaan wind is made to enter the Kundalini. This is aided by exercising the muscles of the lower abdomen and pelvic region, moving them so as to felicitate the opening of the mouth of the Kundalini and allow the pressurized air to sneak into the bore-hole.

²The Granthis have been described in verse no. 86-87 of this Canto 1.]

114. This is the way how the vital winds are used to pierce through the various Granthis located at the rear part of the body (along the vertebral column). When this happens, a sensation of pricking is felt which resembles the bite of an ant (114).

115. The practitioner should practice to hold the vital wind in the Sushumna Naadi. With this, he is successful in piercing through the Rudra Granthi (see verse no. 87) and becomes a personification of Lord Rudra (one of the forms of Lord Shiva). [In other words, by harnessing sufficient energy to untie the Rudra Granthi, the ascetic assumes spiritual and other mystical powers of Yoga that makes him senior and most respected amongst ascetics, and this is metaphorically said when he is compared to Lord Shiva who is the patron deity of all ascetics.] (115).

116. When the Chandra Naadi and the Surya Naadi (i.e. the Ida and Pingla Naadis corresponding to the left and right nostrils respectively) are brought in harmony, i.e. when they are equally de-clogged and breathing through both of them is done equally easily¹, the aspirant is deemed to have pierced through the three Granthis symbolising the three inherent Gunas (i.e. the three qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama) that are present in all persons².

Having managed to pierce through this barrier, the ascetic attains a state of existence that transcends it, i.e. that is not conditioned by any of the three Gunas. Therefore he becomes an embodiment of Lord Shiva himself; he inculcates in him all the

auspicious virtues possessed by Shiva along with all the mystical powers, called the various Siddhis, that accompany success in Yoga (116).

[Note--¹Until the time when all the three Granthis are not pierced and the vital wind has not entered the Sushumna Naadi, the person is not able to breathe freely from both the nostrils. The very fact that the passages of the two nostrils are free and allow a free way to the inhaling and exhaling exercise proves that all the toxins in the body have been eliminated and the person has reached the stage when he has successfully achieved the aim of doing Pranayam—to detoxify the body and prepare it for the ultimate goal of Yoga, which is to make one experience the inherent divinity and the shine of the pure consciousness present inside the person's own self. This shine of the conscious 'self' and the glory of its divinity were marred by the various faults and impurities that had wrapped the person's true 'self' in a dark veil of delusions and ignorance. The various Gunas are the paints that had virtually obscured the real colour of the soul. When they are scrapped off by means of Yoga, the original shine of the pure consciousness comes to the fore. Refer also to verse nos. 56, 68 and 133-134.

²A person who is spiritually inclined and has a clear conscience is the person who is a true Yogi (a true ascetic) and is the one who has symbolically vanquished the three Granthis representing the three Gunas. These Gunas are compared to 'knots' or Granthis because they are impediments in realisation of one's natural qualities and powers of the soul; they prevent the inborn divinity and auspicious spiritual nature of the creature to come to the fore. These Gunas act as conditioning elements, influencing the creature and its overall character. These three basic Gunas or qualities that are present in all the persons in different ratios decide his individual temperament, behavioural patterns, thought processes, and other character and personality traits. The best of the three is Sata which refers to noble traits of auspiciousness and righteousness; a man having a greater proportion of Sata would naturally be a holy, pious and a spiritually inclined man. The second is Raja which makes him inclined towards the world and its mundane affairs and frantic life; he would like to enjoy the world and the comforts provided by its material and sense objects. The last is the Tama quality which makes him pervert, sinful, of a low mental caliber, and very selfish. Such a man is said to be covered by a dark veil of delusions and ignorance.

This conditioning by the varying ratios of the three Gunas results in the creation of myriad variety of characters and temperaments in the creatures, whereas the Atma, the pure conscious soul in all living beings, is the same in all of them. This 'piercing of the three Granthis' is a symbolic way of vanquishing of these three Gunas, or being able to overcome their influences. A person who is free from their fetters is a free man. This is equivalent to his obtaining Mukti, or getting liberation and deliverance from all conditionings effects of and influences exerted by all extraneous elements which mar his own spiritual nature.]

117. This state of accomplishment in Yoga when the two divine forces of Nature are united, i.e. when the Shiva element (represented by the Chandra Naadi or the Ida Naadi) and the Shakti element (represented by the Surya Naadi or the Pingla Naadi) are united by the process of Pranayam done as matter of routine during Yoga, the ascetic experiences extreme sense of elation, ecstasy, bliss and joy which is comparable to the one experienced by a thirsty elephant who is able to drink cold water through his trunk to his heart's content (117).

118. The Sushumna Naadi is like a strong duct which is as robust as Vajra (the sturdiest and the strongest material in existence from which Indra, the king of Gods, had his

weapon crafted). The practitioner holds the vital winds (the Apan wind along with other winds collected from the other parts of the body, such as Vyan, Samaan and Udaan) in this Naadi. At that time, a scintillating display of light is witnessed there in this Naadi which symbolically resembles the simultaneous appearance of twenty-one glittering gems (118).

119. All these splendid twenty one gems (scintillating spots of brilliant light like sparklers from a fire-work display) appear to be threaded together in the Sushumna Naadi like a garland of splendid gems.

The spiritual aspirant proceeds on this path towards obtaining Moksha, or finding his liberation and deliverance for his 'self'. Hence, this Sushumna Naadi is regarded by ascetics as the royal highway to obtaining Moksha, and therefore to acknowledge this fact they have called it the 'Vishwa Roopani', or the personification of the best way to obtaining Moksha in this world. [In this sense, the scintillating light would be like the lamp-posts along this highway which not only illuminates the way for the ascetic as he progresses in his meditation, but also act as signposts to indicate the level of success he has attained.] (119).

120. Just like the sun and the moon which move continuously and in a systematic manner all through the day and the night respectively in a regular cycle, the wise and expert ascetic ensures that his Pranayam and its accompanying exercises (Purak, Kumbhak and Rechak) continue undisrupted and unhindered day and night.

This constant practice of Pranayam enables him to retain the wind during Kumbhak for a prolonged period, as the body would have become accustomed and trained to retain it involuntarily. [In other words, after a long practice, the Kumbhak phase would become so natural for him that while he sleeps, his natural breathing would stop. The wind drawn in would be held inside the body without causing any discomfort to the ascetic all the while he sleeps. For all practical purposes, his body would lie like dead because his breathing function—consisting of inhalation and exhalation—has stopped and the abdominal muscles show no movement.] (120).

121. This process of Kumbhak should be repeatedly done by inhaling air/wind through the left nostrils (called the 'Pashim Dwaar'). This is a shortened form of full Kumbhak. [The full form would be to inhale through one nostril and exhale through the other nostril in the first round, and then reverse the process by inhaling from the second nostril and exhaling through the first. This cycle is alternated with each inhalation and exhalation.] (121).

122. When the air is drawn in through the left nostril, it fills the entire body during the phase of Kumbhak. [In other words, the breath oxidises all the tissues of the body while it is held inside during Kumbhak.] It is then expelled during the Rechak phase of Pranayam. [Though it is not mentioned here, the exhalation is done through the right nostril. The only difference between this brief form of Pranayam and full version of Pranayam is that in the former case the inhalation is once again done by the left nostril and not through the right nostril as would be the case in regular and full-fledged form of Pranayam.] (122).

123. No matter where the body is located, i.e. in whatever condition it is and whichever place it is in, the wise and erudite ascetic is able to successfully control both his body and mind to concentrate on doing Yoga. [The necessity of a secluded place is an ideal situation, but sometimes it is not practically feasible. This verse addresses this problem.]

Only such an ascetic is truly able to attain success in Yoga. [This is because he has been able to exercise real and full control over his senses and prevent them from getting distracted by the cacophony created by the mundane world and its frantic life in which he is forced to live due to various existential circumstances.]

He is deemed to be eligible for and has the right competence to obtain Mukti (liberation and deliverance). He lives in this world without a trace of Ahankar (ego, pride and haughtiness of his spiritual achievement or mystical powers that accrue to him as a reward of Yoga). This makes him happy and blissful. [This is because Ahankar is at the root of all problems that come in the way of blissfulness and happiness in this world. It creates in its wake a chain of jealousy, ill-will, spite, anger, emotional and sentimental restlessness etc, never allowing the person peace at any time.]

Those who are stupid enough to take repeated births and die consequentially are self-destroying their chance for emancipation and salvation. Such people can never hope to step on this eclectic and divine path of Yoga (123).

124. As one progresses further in his Yoga practice, he will reach a stage when his sub-conscious has been sufficiently eliminated from existence, i.e. his sub-conscious mind ceases to function and recollect any sensations pertaining to the body or the sensory inputs originating in the external world. In this stage, the practitioner does not even feel the distinction between the various winds, i.e. all his Pran Vayus become indistinguishable from one another; they merge into one another to become one single 'air element'. [That is, he is unaware of the fact that he is breathing or not; whether the wind held inside has been expelled or not. This is the perpetual state of Samadhi, the trance-like state of oneness of existence.]

When he has reached this stage, if he still seeks the guidance of scriptures that deal with Yoga or even consults a Guru no matter how expert he is, the ascetic cannot hope to obtain Moksha (final liberation and deliverance from the fetters of the body, and with it from the world). [This is because he is still doubtful and skeptical of his success; he is not confident and certain of himself. If anything is done without being certain of its effectiveness and the fruits or rewards that come on its successful completion, then it is natural that it is done half-heartedly and the result would not be up to the expected mark.] (124).

125. Even as the leech sucks out blood from the body, the Brahm Naadi (the duct leading up to the head; the Sushumna Naadi) of an expert ascetic who is constantly doing the various Yoga exercises as enumerated in this Upanishad, is able to weaken all the elements of the body (and that is why the body becomes thin and emaciated) (125).

[Note—When an ascetic has ventured to do this stern form of Yoga in the first place, he is mentally ready and prepared to shed the body voluntarily in order to obtain liberation and deliverance from its cumbersome burden. He does not wish to suffer the horrors of old age and a failing body and the intense pain of the last moments of life, and wait for them to happen in the normal course by hoping to retain the body, for then it would be too late for him. So naturally he is not bothered by this gross body becoming weak and

thin. He has more than compensated for this by a robust Spirit and the attainment of majestic mystical powers called the various Siddhis.]

126. When practice of the various Bandhs and other aspects of Yoga (such as Pranayam) are done regularly, the Chitta (the sub-conscious mind) and the Atma (pure consciousness) become one; they virtually merge into one another. Then the Bindu does not fall; it is not expelled; it is not destroyed and ruined (126).

[Note—The word ‘Bindu’ literally refers to the ‘dot’ on the top of the symbol for the divine Mantra OM, but more practically here it refers to the ‘semen’ which represents the distilled and concentrated form of life-injecting vitality and stamina present in the body of the practitioner. Usually when strenuous exercises are done by a person of a weak physique, this semen is involuntarily ejected. So this verse stresses the point that this does not apply to the ascetic who also does strenuous exercises and has become physically weak in the gross body, but it does not imply weakness of his internal organs or any loss of his inherent strength, vitality and stamina.]

127. In the higher stages of Yoga when the practitioner does not have to do Rechak (exhalation) and Purak (inhalation) but remains in the Kumbhak state of filled air (i.e. when he has learnt to control his breathing for prolonged periods), he begins to hear various sounds collectively called Naad¹. This is the cosmic sound which is heard by him. During this stage, he also tastes the Amrit, the elixir of eternal bliss, dripping from the Chandra Mandal². [The ‘Chandra’ is the moon which is supposed to be the heavenly pitcher full of this Amrit where it was stored by the Gods for their own use. It is like the honeycomb full of sweet honey and so full that the honey leaks and drips for anyone to pick up its drops.] (127).

[Note—¹Refer verse no. 147 of Canto 1 below.

²Refer verse no. 146 of Canto 1 below.]

128. Then thirst and hunger along with all other shortcomings of the body are eliminated. The ascetic remains perpetually submerged in his own state of eternal consciousness (128).

129. It is out of great affection for you (Brahma) that I (Shiva) have narrated these signs of Yoga.

The four broad types in which Yoga is divided into are basically the Yoga which has been outlined by me. However, these four types of Yoga are the following—Mantra Yoga, Laya Yoga, Hath Yoga and Raj Yoga (129).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 19.]

130. All these four types of Yoga are in fact the same thing, and hence the combined form of Yoga is called ‘Maha Yoga’, i.e. the great Yoga. It incorporates all the details of these four independent forms of Yoga. [In other words, a comprehensive Yoga would be one in which all the four forms are an integral part.] (130).

131. Usually everyone uses the Mantra ‘Hans-Hans’ to do Japa (repetition). But by the grace of a wise teacher the ascetic realises that the real Mantra that ought to be repeated during the course of Yoga in which the wind rises up in the Sushumna Naadi is ‘So-a-ham, So-a-ham’¹ (131).

[Note—Refer Canto 2, verse nos. 5, 8-11 and Canto 6, verse no. 20, 51-54 of this Upanishad which highlight the importance and significance of this Mantra. Briefly this Mantra means ‘That is me’; or ‘that supreme transcendental entity in none but me’. The word ‘me’ refers to the awareness of the pure consciousness and does not refer to the physical gross body of the ascetic. The word ‘Hans’ literally means a Swan which is considered as the wisest bird and is used as a metaphor for something that is extremely pure and divine. Hans is the vehicle of Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom and knowledge, as a symbolic iconographic depiction of the fact that the auspicious virtues of enlightenment, wisdom, erudition and possession of truthful knowledge of the reality are borne by an entity that is called Hans. In the realm of metaphysics, this Hans refers to the Atma, the pure and conscious ‘self’ of the creature. That is why this Mantra ‘Hans-Hans’ is same as ‘So-a-ham’; the latter is the implied and essential meaning of the Mantra ‘Hans’. Since a Yogi is expected to choose the best and leave aside the not-so-important aspect of anything, he chooses the Mantra ‘So-a-ham’ over the Mantra ‘Hans’.

There are a number of Upanishads that describe the Mantra ‘Hans’—viz. (a) Krishna Yajur Veda—Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6; Canto 6, verse no. 15; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3-4; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 24, 61-65; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11, Canto 6, verse no. 20, 52-54; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 99. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Hansopanishad is exclusively dedicated to explain the concept of the pure conscious Atma by way of using the metaphor of a Hans. (c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 31-35, 82-83, 93.

The Mantra *So-a-Ham*—This Mantra is extolled in a number of Upanishads as a synonymous of the Mantra ‘Hans’. For instance—(i) Sam Veda = Yogchudani Upanishad, verse no. 83. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 34, 78-79.]

132. [This verse describes what is known as Mantra Yoga.]

The Yoga done with the aid of this eclectic Mantra ‘So-a-ham’ is the one which is called ‘Mantra Yoga’. The divine effects of this Mantra is witnessed through the ‘Paschim Dwaar’, the left nostrils (from where the elixir of bliss and happiness, called Amrit, drips and tasted by the ascetic—refer verse no. 127). [In other words, when the ascetic does Pranayam using the left nostril to draw in air as described in verse nos. 121-124 above, the Mantra which he should use is So-a-ham. See also verse no. 143 and 145 of this Canto 1 below.] (132).

133. [This verse describes what is known as Hath Yoga.]

‘The letter ‘ha’ of the Mantra So-a-ham stands for the sun and its divine glories. The letter ‘sa’ of the Mantra So-a-ham stands for the moon and its divine glories’—when the ascetic does the full exercise of Yoga with this eclectic understanding and faith, he symbolically establishes a union between these two divine entities because they are part of the same Mantra. Such Yoga is called ‘Hath Yoga’ (133).

[Note—Refer verse nos. 56, 68 and 116-117 in this context.

The letter ‘Sa’ is a silent sound made while one draws in breath, i.e. does Purak, and since this is done through the Ida Naadi, also called the Moon Naadi passing thorough the left nostril, it represents the Moon God. On the other hand, the letter ‘Ha’ is the silent sound made while exhaling breath through the Pingla Naadi, called the Surya Naadi passing through the right nostrils, and hence it stands for the Sun God. In other words, the letter ‘Sa’ is the Mantra for the Moon God and ‘Ha’ is the Mantra for the Sun God.

During the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam, both exhalation and inhalation are stopped and a mixing of the air takes place inside the body. This would be tantamount to bringing together of the Moon and the Sun. The Sun is hot while the Moon is cool; therefore this process neutralizes them both and brings about evenness and homogeneity. All restlessness, agitation, state of flux and fidgeting are stopped. A state of profound calmness and serenity is established. This process of doing Pranayam by inhaling through the left nostril symbolising the Moon God and exhaling through the right nostril symbolising the Sun God has been outlined in Krishna Yajur Veda's Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 9-17. It is called 'Saraswati Chaalan'.]

134. When a union between the individual Atma (soul) of the practitioner of Yoga, called the 'Kshetragya'¹, and the Parmatma (the supreme Soul) is brought about by this practice of Hath Yoga², then this Yoga eliminates the very cause of all spiritual and other problems that have been tormenting the ascetic till now³ (134).

[Note—¹The word *Kshetragya* means one who is the Lord of a particular realm and knows about everything there; he is responsible for everything being done in his realm and is almost like a commander or magistrate for that area. Since the Atma, or the pure conscious soul of a person is the supreme authority as far as that individual person is concerned, it is not only responsible for what that person does but is the true identity of that person much like the magistrate or the commander represents the king or the government in his person and all his actions are deemed to be done on behalf of the king or the government though he is an independent person.

²The *Hath Yoga* is the Yoga that teaches how to bring about the union of Pran (the breath, the vital wind that resides in the upper part of the body) and the Apaana (the wind that moves down in the body and helps in digestion and excretion, the vital wind that lives in the lower part of the body) by means of strict following of the eight fold path of Yoga such as observance of Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna, concentration and visualization of the presence of the Supreme Being in the point of the forehead where the root of the nose meets the middle of the eyebrows, and Samadhi. It teaches the practical aspects of spiritual Yoga and includes various exercises—Bandhs, Aasans, Mudras and Pranyam.

³The union of the individual soul and the supreme Soul is the main spiritual objective of Yoga. It therefore strives to bring about a meeting of the Kshetragya and the Parmatma. All problems that the creature faces is due to the fact that it has forgotten its high pedigree and origin; it has forgotten that it is the Supreme Being personified. This is because the pure consciousness of the individual and the cosmic consciousness is the one and the same, albeit viewed on different scales—the former is at the micro level while the latter is at the macro level of existence. Had the creature been aware of this basic tenet, there would have been no question of it getting bogged down and entangled in worldly delusions and their attendant problems. To remove this apparent artificial dichotomy is the main spiritual purpose of Yoga. As has been outlined in note of verse no. 124, 133 above, this union is symbolically brought about in the Kumbhak phase when not only the inhaled and exhaled winds but all other vital winds present inside the body are mixed and homogenized into one 'air element'. This removes artificial distinctions between them and a universal harmony is established in their functioning. This unification is symbolised as a union between the Atma and the Parmatma.]

135. Persistent and consistent practice of Hath Yoga results in Laya Yoga¹, i.e. it helps in the merger and dissolution of the individual soul of the creature, called the Jiva, with the supreme Soul of creation known as Brahm; it helps to bring about oneness between them.

The Chitta (the sub-conscious mind and its power to think, remember and act as a referral bank of the intellect) dissolves in the Atma, and the vital winds in the body lose their inherent restlessness and become calm and quietened² (135).

[Note--¹The word 'Laya' means merger and getting dissolved. Hence, *Laya Yoga* refers to the merger of the individual soul with the supreme Soul of creation as described in verse no. 134 above. Refer also to Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 23 in this context.

²In other words, as meditation and contemplation progresses, the ascetic's restless mind becomes quiet and calmed down. He enters that phase of Yoga which is called Samadhi, because all his bodily awareness of the external world of sense objectives also ceases in a gradual manner, and with it the restless tendencies of the sense organs. This happens because the sense organs of the body have a natural affinity towards this material world of sensual pleasure and comfort for it (the world) provides these sense organs the opportunity to gratify themselves. The sense organs are not concerned what effect this has on the creature's long term spiritual interests; they want immediate gratification. Hence, when the mind and its sub-conscious are pulled away from this world, the body naturally becomes quiet and calm. This is symbolised by saying that the vital winds in the body have become calm and quiet, because all efforts of the body are made possible by one or other of these winds.

According to *Subalo Upanishad*, canto 9, verse no. 14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there ten winds in the body, and they perform specialized tasks as follows. (1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaana—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaan—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Saman—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambh—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antarayaam—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naag—this controls the 'Chitta' or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

Under ordinary circumstances the mind is constantly restless because it is being fed by stimuli received by the sense organs of perceptions and must simultaneously respond to them by ordering the organs of action to act accordingly. By attaining success in Hath Yoga, the physical gross body consisting of both the organs of perception and action is controlled, which in its wake would help to control the mind and its sub-conscious. When Hath Yoga is successfully done, the sense organs are forcibly stopped from being attracted towards the various sense objects of the world; the mind would therefore have no cause to be distracted. This results in obtaining a state of great tranquility, serenity, calmness and quietness. This is another way of saying that the 'winds have become quietened' because all the activities of the body are made possible by the winds.

These winds are like the many horses of the king's royal chariot which together help pull the latter under the control of an expert charioteer. An expert ascetic who has successfully done Hath Yoga is deemed to have established control over these winds by controlling the body and its sense organs. The winds now become one and stop their individual random activities which had hitherto been buffeting the creature's mind, tossing it in various directions, thereby acting as an impediment in his ability to focus his attention and concentrate his mind on any given task at hand. This is metaphorically indicated by saying that he has established 'Laya Yoga' by merging all the different units of his existence and establishing them in one unit called the 'consciousness' (the Atma) at

the micro level, and with the supreme cosmic consciousness (Brahm) at the macro level. In other words, an expert ascetic who has been successful in controlling his sense organs as well as his mind by doing Hath Yoga has virtually reined in all these winds much like an expert charioteer controls the numerous horses of the king's chariot. Once this happens, all the winds work in sync with each other, i.e. their independent activities cease and they become one unit which is easy to handle. The harmonized wind or air element can now be focused on spiritual pursuits so that the boat can move ahead without being tossed and kicked around by ever-changing directions of the wind and reach its destination smoothly and with ease. This harmonizing and unification of the various functions of the body which results in its calming down and overcoming of its restlessness is like the case of the chariot moving comfortably and pleasurably if the horses move in a coordinated manner instead of pulling randomly here and there to rock the vehicle, or like the case of a boat whose sails are full of wind blowing in a single direction without changing course frequently and violently. Refer also verse nos. 66-69 of this Canto 1.]

136-137. The extreme sense ecstasy and a feeling of utter bliss obtained by the union of the Atma and the Parmatma brought about by Hath and Laya Yogas is comparable to the one obtained at the climax of intercourse when the male semen is ejaculated in the female vagina to bring about a union between the male sperm and the female ova (137-137).

138. Raaj Yoga¹ helps in obtaining the various Siddhis (mystical powers) such as Anima etc. [Refer note to verse no. 44 above.]

These four Yogas (Mantra, Hath, Laya and Raaj) are possible when the Pran and Apaana Vayus (the two main vital winds) are merged with one another. That is, when a union between all the functions of the body is brought about and full control of the mind and body is established (138).

[Note—The Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 129 states that when an ascetic is successful in doing Raaj Yoga, he need not worry about doing Hath Yoga any longer. This is because Raaj Yoga entails total control of the mind and intellect. Once this objective is achieved, i.e. once the restlessness of the body and its wayward sense organs are brought under control, there is apparently no necessity for making special efforts to control them. These have been the cause of so much distress, restlessness and discomfort for the mind, and through it for the Atma of the creature. Once the mind is controlled, the body would automatically be controlled. The Raaj Yoga, which deals primarily with the control of the mind, ultimately leads to the state of Samadhi.

¹The *Raaj Yoga* is therefore the primary form of the two aspects of Yoga concerned with 'self control', the other being the Hath Yoga. Whereas the Hath Yoga deals with the control of the body and its sense organs by strenuous exercises involving various Mudras, Aasans, Bandhs and Mantras, the Raaj Yoga is dedicated to control of the mind. Therefore, Hath Yoga is merely an instrument to aid the Raaj Yoga. In other words, the main objective of Hath Yoga is to enable the practitioner to achieve success in Raaj Yoga. Thus we see that the Yoga propounded by Patanjali is the one which is known as Raaj Yoga because it fulfills the objective and definition of this ultimate and noble form of Yoga by observing certain strict rules of conduct and self control.]

139. Oh Brahma! I (Shiva) have described this process of Yoga to you. Success in it can be obtained by constant practice; there is no way except this. [In other words, there is no short cut for it.]

This is the considered view of Shiva and hence it cannot be otherwise (139).

140. By practicing Yoga in a persistent and consistent manner for a very long time, one can gradually obtain Mukti (liberation and deliverance) from the fetters of this mortal and gross body in this world. For example, it takes a lot of practice for a monkey to reach a high place on a tree. [The monkey starts at the lower branches and gradually makes its way up a tree with a dense covering of foliage. Likewise, the ascetic starts with Pranayam and other simple exercises and gradually proceeds with his Yoga exercises to ultimately reach its higher level attain complete success in it.] (140).

141. If total success in Yoga is not obtained in this life due to some reason, such as being lazy and doing it half-heartedly, and the ascetic dies, then he has to take a new birth depending upon the various Vasanas (unfulfilled worldly passions, yearnings and desires) of his previous life. [In other words, one of the main causes for remaining unsuccessful in Yoga is the prevalence of various Vasanas in life. This acts as impediment in successful completion of Yoga. Hence, attempt should be made to vanquish all the Vasanas.] (141).

142. In the next birth, if the creature has some pending rewards of his past good deeds, then he becomes fortunate to come in contact with a learned and self-realised Guru (moral preceptor, guide and teacher). With his help he enhances his spiritual stature and obtains quick rewards by proceeding ahead in his spiritual endeavours on the symbolic path called the 'Pashim Dwar'¹ (142).

[Note—¹The word *Pashim Dwar* refers to the auspicious and noble path of Yoga by doing Pranayam especially through the left nostril, because the word 'Pashim' means the left. This form of Pranayam has been described in verse nos. 121-124 and 132 of this Canto 1 above.]

143. By the good effect of the practice of Yoga done in one's previous life, a speedier result is obtained in the current life. [This is the reason why some acclaimed ascetics are able to achieve success in a short period of time while others spend a life time for the same effect.] This is called 'Kaak Mat'¹ (143).

[Note—¹The word 'Kaak' means the 'crow', while 'Mat' means 'according to someone's view'. Therefore the composite word *Kaak Mat* means the view expressed by some great sage who had to assume the form of a crow due to some deeds that he had done in his past life. But even in this body of a crow he could successfully do Yoga and find his liberation and deliverance. It refers to the great legendary sage named Kagbhusund who retells the story of the Ramayan, the epic story of Lord Rama, for the benefit of Garud, the great bird which is a vehicle of Lord Vishnu. This episode is narrated in the epic Ram Charit Manas by Goswami Tulsidas in its 7th Chapter called the Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 63 to no. 125.]

144. There is no better advice than the one given by Kaak Mat. By following this advice one can easily find Mukti, i.e. one can get liberation and deliverance in whatever body one lives. This is the teaching of Lord Shiva (and hence is correct and truthful) (144).

145. By doing Hath Yoga the creature is able to conquer the world (because he would have established full control over his sense organs which are the basic cause of his remaining tethered to this world of sense objects).

But without practicing the famous ‘Paschim Marg/Dwar’ form of Yoga he would not find Moksha (emancipation and salvation; final liberation and deliverance)¹ (145).

[Note—¹The Paschim Dwar form of Yoga refers to doing steady Pranayam involving the left nostril and the use of the Mantra ‘So-a-ham’, meaning ‘I am that Brahm’. Continuous repetition of this Mantra has a profound psychological impact upon the practitioner, and by and by he indeed becomes one like Brahm. This form of Mantra Yoga leads to the Laya Yoga—i.e. the use of this Mantra leads to the situation whereby the practitioner identifies himself with the supreme transcendental Brahm instead of his body. As soon as this happens, he is deemed to be liberated from the fetters that tie all the creatures to this body and the world. This is obtaining Moksha through the Paschim Dwar Yoga. Refer verse no. 121-124 and 132 of this Canto 1 in this context.]

146. First all the different diseases of the body are eliminated and then, as a consequence of this, the body itself feels light and detoxified. Then the ascetic becomes uniform and steady in whatever circumstantial situation he has to live in this world; he never feels uneasy, distressed, anguished and agitated¹. In this eclectic and divine state of quietude, equanimity and fortitude, he enjoys the bliss obtained by drops of Amrit, the elixir of eternal bliss and happiness, dripping from the moon (which is said to be the celestial pitcher of this elixir)² (146).

[Note--¹That is, he has managed to effectively exercise self control over himself in a holistic manner. Nothing ruffles him, whether it pertains to the external world or to his own body. This is because since he has effectively controlled his sense organs of perception as well as his mind, the latter are not attracted by the illusionary charms of this material world of sense objects, and since he has been regularly practicing exercises of Yoga his body has been toned up and detoxified of all the poisons that had been at the root cause of all his physical ailments. Resultantly, he becomes quietened and characterised by the virtues of equanimity and fortitude.

²The moon’s light is very cool, soothing and comforting for agitated nerves, and its effect on the nerves is the opposite of that of the sun. Here it means that when an ascetic has reached that state of success in Yoga when all his individuality has been lost, when he has been able to exercise full control over his gross body and its sense organs as well as his subtle body and its mind, heart and vital winds, he enjoys the same calmness and quietude that is enjoyed when one lies under the open sky in the shine of a full moon after a long hard day at work. Refer verse no. 127, Canto 1 of this Upanishad as well as Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 73.]

147. An ascetic should learn to control the vital wind forces in the body¹, and then harness their stupendous powers to effectively control his essential elements called the Dhaatus².

When the fire of Yoga has been kindled in this way and is burning vigorously, one hears various types of sounds or roars called ‘Naad’³. Besides this, the body becomes very malleable and flexible (because all the stiffness of the body and its muscles and arteries has been eliminated by being made supple and elastic by constant exercises and getting detoxified and warmed by the heat generated during Yoga) (147).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 95-97, 106.

²Refer verse nos. 40, 56 and 68 of this Canto 1.

³The word *Naad* has two connotations here. One refers to the sound heard when one stands near a blazing fire, and the other refers to the cosmic sound heard in the head when all external sound-interferences having their origin in the external world cease. The first

sound is the one heard when one stands near a blazing fire. In this case, one naturally hears different genres of sounds typical of a burning fire—such as for example a hissing sound, a sputtering sound, a crackling sound, a rustling sound, a whistling sound, a roaring sound etc. They are caused by the crackling of firewood and various impurities in it as well as the ingredients added to keep the fire burning brightly along with the friction created in the various layers of air which are at different levels of temperature around the fire. In the present context, the same effect is obtained when the ascetic does Yoga because the internal airs get heated and this burns the different impurities present inside the body. As this heated air rises, its sound is heard more distinctly in the ears. To this is added the cosmic sound of Naad heard in the head when all sounds originating in the external world are excluded during concentration of Yoga. Refer verse no. 127 above of this Canto 1.]

148. The ascetic is able to overcome the effects of various seasons such as rainy and winter seasons. [That is, he is the same all year round; no changes in weather or circumstances ever ruffle him.] His grossness and languor are eliminated. He becomes so light that he can move through the sky (like a bird). He can assume any form he wishes and has the speed and agility like that of the wind element. He becomes all-knowing, all-wise and omniscient (148).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 51, 73-75, 97, 102, 108-111, 126-127 etc.]

149. All the three worlds (the celestial, nether and terrestrial) becoming accessible to him and he can move in them at his free will¹. All the eight Siddhis² are accessible to him. Say, when camphor is burnt, how can it have any hardness left in it? [Here the ascetic is compared to camphor that has been burnt and has lost all its earlier stiffness and grossness.] (149).

[Note—¹Earlier, verse no. 85 of this Canto has described how to conquer the three symbolic worlds.

²The eight Siddhis have been enumerated in note to verse no. 44 of this Canto.]

150. In the same way (like the burning of camphor), how can hardness and rigidity indicating arrogance, stubbornness and haughtiness ever remain in an ascetic when his 'Ahankar' (ego and false sense of pride) is eliminated.

A spiritual aspirant free from Ahankar is so enriched with glorious powers of the real 'self' (the pure consciousness) that he can do anything he wishes¹.

An ascetic who has conquered his Ahankar becomes the best ascetic amongst his peers. He is deemed to have obtained his freedom (from the bondage of Ahankar which acts like a formidable shackle too difficult to break). He can assume as many forms as he wishes (by the virtue of the various Siddhis he has obtained—refer Yogtattva Upanishad, 105, 109-111) (150).

[Note--¹In other words, it is the Ahankar that prevents a man's true potentials from coming to the fore. For example, there are situations when one has been stubborn and inflexible in dealing with certain circumstances, but in due course of events he realises his follies and understands that he was at fault. But ordinarily he would desist from accepting his mistakes because it would hurt his exaggerated ego, inflated self-pride and a false sense of self righteousness; he is too proud to admit that he has indeed committed a grave mistake. He would rather suffer from the consequences and blame others for his misfortunes than accepting his errors. If his haughty and stubborn behaviour has hurt others and caused unwarranted mental or physical agony to them, he would refuse to

relent and ask for forgiveness—for he is too proud and full of Ahankar to do so. This is what is meant here. A true ascetic has stupendous mystical powers but he is never proud of them or his spiritual achievements. He is pious, humble, and simplicity personified.]

151. Such an accomplished ascetic becomes Mukta (liberated and delivered) even while he is alive in this world and lives in this physical gross body. [This is because this body becomes irrelevant for him; he has obtained complete control over it so much so that the normal bodily functions such as output of urine, stool, saliva, mucous and sweat etc. have come almost to a standstill—refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no.57-58. This is called ‘Jivan Mukti’.]

Worldly Siddhis (accomplishments, successes and eclectic specialized powers) are of two types—Kalpit and A-Kalpit¹ (151).

[Note--¹The *Kalpita Siddhis* are the ones which are created with efforts made for them using various means and methods. They have a limited scope, are perishable, and have predictable and imaginable powers and potentials that can be foreseen. On the other hand, the *A-Kalpita Siddhis* are those which are self-generated and cannot be created by any artificial means, are natural and with unimaginable mystical potentials and powers that cannot be predicted. Refer also Canto 5, verse nos. 46-55 of the present Upanishad as well as the Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 56-102, and the Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 23-24.]

152. The ‘Kalpit Siddhis’ are those that are obtained by diligent efforts and conscious endeavour on the part of the ascetic or any spiritual aspirant. Success in obtaining mystical powers and acquiring spiritual authority in this case of Kalpit Siddhis is done with the help of various juices and essences called the various ‘Rasas’ (such as the Som Rasa used in fire sacrifice as an offering to the Gods and is said to be divinely blessed), the different medicinal herbs called the ‘Aushadhis’ (which are also used in fire sacrifices to clear the environment of toxic gases and germs), all the different deeds called ‘Kriyas’ (which are auspicious, righteous and noble in character and would therefore result in creation of positive energy and right circumstances conducive to one’s all round welfare and well being, here referring to the numerous rituals associated with formal fire sacrifices and other religious activities), and practice of ‘Mantras’ (i.e. doing Japa or repetition with them—this helps to harness the stupendous positive energy encrypted in their letters and words as well as to help the mind to learn concentration which in turn helps in training it to become calm, quiet, rested and focused on the work at hand, thereby achieving desired results with full attention of the mind’s faculties at work) (152).

[Note—These Siddhis are called *Kalpita* because their powers and potential effects can be predicted and imagined depending upon the medium used to acquire them. Such as for example, if one particular herb is consumed during the course of Yoga, its benefits as well as harms can be well predicted in advance. Similarly, the effects of the Mantras, Kriyas (deeds), and Rasas (juices; extracts) can well be ascertained before hand; they can be predicted with a great degree of accuracy.]

153. These Kalpit Siddhis are not everlasting; they are transient in their effect, and their mystical powers are less effective and less potent. Some of them can be obtained easily without much hassle and even without employing any special means, while others require

some sort of special effort and employment of special means or ways or measures as well as some degree of diligence on the part of the aspirant to be successfully accessed (153).

154. The A-Kalpit Siddhis, on the contrary, are those whose stupendity, far-reaching mystical powers and grand effects cannot be imagined, pre-conceived, foreseen and predicted in advance. Such Siddhis are the exclusive domain of the Supreme Being called the Ishwar; they are possessed by him and are under his command. Such Siddhis are numerous and of different genres. They are available to (or can be accessed by) an honest and sincere ascetic who is engaged in self realisation with steadfastness of purpose, with persistent consistency and diligence. He is independent of any other props to support his spiritual journey except following the eclectic path of Yoga (meditation and contemplation). That is, he relies on Yoga only for his spiritual emancipation and salvation (154).

[Note—In other words, such an aspirant who sticks to only one path for his spiritual liberation and deliverance, i.e. who follows the path of Yoga as envisioned in this and other Yoga Upanishads, is the only one who can successfully acquire such mystical powers and astounding potentials as the ones that come under the classification of ‘A-Kalpit Siddhis’. He therefore would not take the help of any kind of external help in accomplishing his spiritual goal of attaining self-realisation and liberation from the bondage of this gross and perishable body. He would not use medicinal drugs or their spin-offs in the form of various juices and essences such as the Som Rasa used during formal fire sacrifices to keep him going in his spiritual practice and maintain the level of his energy, strength, stamina and vitality, nor does he rely upon so many other ways and paths said to provide liberation and deliverance to the soul as proffered by various versions of different scriptures and their myriad interpretations. He relies only on one eclectic path of Yoga to the exclusion of all others. No one can judge the intensity and reach of his spiritual powers because they are unimaginably great and astounding.]

155. Such A-Kalpit Siddhis are obtained by acclaimed ascetics by practicing Yoga for a long period of time. Those ascetics who have no Vasanas (worldly passions, yearnings and desires) are the ones who can acquire them, and their acquisition gives them immense strength and powers. They can assume any form they wish. These Siddhis are eternal and everlasting; they are not perishable (155).

156. Besides using them to attain oneness with the Parmatma, the supreme Soul of creation, the supreme Brahm, the ascetic should otherwise keep them a top secret. To be in possession of such stupendous mystical powers is a sign of a successful and accomplished ascetic who is Brahm and self realised (156).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 73-79.]

157. Just like high-flying birds cruising through the sky have a panoramic view of different pilgrim sites as they move ahead towards their destination, these Siddhis also provide the ascetic many different grand visions of the magnificent glories that are associated with their acquisition, but he remains unconcerned and unruffled by them, and instead moves ahead on his spiritual journey steadily and unwaveringly (157).

[Note—Such wise, erudite and enlightened ascetics have a broad perspective and a broad vision of life and its existential Truth. They are not narrow-minded and stringy in their approach to life and its problems. They look at everything from a high moral ground and

with a spiritual perspective. Their view of the world rises above the mundane and the selfish, and in spite of living in it they remain totally aloof and dispassionate. Their demeanour and world-view resembles that of a bird that is flying over a pilgrim site—it sees it from a broad angle and the holiness of the place passes as a fleeting thought through their mind as they fly across it overhead, only to move ahead and put it behind. The bird might even take a short break from its flight and rest for a while, but it never gets emotionally and physically attached to the pilgrim site in the hope of finding salvation by staying put in it. Likewise, the wise ascetic does his duties and remains totally detached from this world, always remaining focused on his spiritual goal by being meditative and contemplative every moment of his life. He experiences everything in this world, he experiences and witnesses the benefits of Yoga, acquires the various Siddhis and witnesses the accompanying acclaim and stupendous powers, but they do not go to his head. He is not tied down by them; he is not shackled by anything. The glamour and adulation of success in Yoga which results in acquisition of different Siddhis do not bother him the least and they do not disturb his calm demeanours. Instead of boasting of them and employing them for worldly gain, he utilizes them to further his efforts in obtaining final liberation and deliverance from this life and its problems.]

158. When an ascetic is not at all affected by loss or gain, i.e. when he remains steady, calm and unmoved under all circumstances, whether they entail great emotional and physical distress and anguish such as when caused by losing something that is very dear to one, or the much excitement and elation that accompanies when something precious is obtained by an ordinary man, it is only then that he is entitled to be called a truly realised ascetic. All the eclectic and mystical Siddhis are easily accessible to him on their own; he won't have to make special effort to acquire them (158).

159. Even as an expert goldsmith is able to tell the purity of gold, the possession of different Siddhis and how the ascetic tackles them is a good measure to identify an ascetic who has attained Jivan Mukti. [The Jivan Mukta ascetic is one who enjoys the benefits of Yoga without letting the charms of the various mystical powers that accrue with it to trap him in their snare of worldly fame; he remains totally detached from the world and the body in spite of remaining alive and doing his duties normally. He remains ever engrossed in doing meditation and contemplation.] (159).

160. The stupendous mystical powers possessed by an accomplished and enlightened ascetic are rarely witnessed or seen openly; they remain hidden and secret with him; he never divulges them or boasts of them. [This is because he does not wish to advertise them for gaining worldly fame and popularity, and he should not even do so as it is prohibited by the scripture—refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 76-79 in this context which proscribes exhibition of one's spiritual powers.]

An ascetic who has no Siddhis (but boasts of possessing them by showing some sleight-of-hand tricks) is regarded as being shackled and tied in fetters. He has no chance of obtaining Mukti (liberation and deliverance) whatsoever (because he is an imposter and fraud) (160).

161. A person whose gross body is freed from the decrepiting and disabling effects of old age and who is free from the fears of death is the one who is deemed to be Jivan

Mukta¹ (i.e. one who is freed from the fetters imposed by the gross perishable body on his eternally and inherently free spirit).

On the other hand, those who continuously die (to take birth again) are no better than animals, chicken, worms and insects. [Why this happens is explained in the next verse no. 162.] (151).

[Note--¹A person who sincerely follows the tenets of Yoga has a well tuned body which is free from all the evil effects of decay and old age. This point is repeatedly stressed in Yoga Upanishads. The practical reason is the rigorous physical detoxifying and revitalizing exercises that are part of Yoga. They rejuvenate the body and keep it in prime shape. So, the bad effects of the normal aging process have no influence upon them. Refer various verses of this Canto 1 itself on this topic, viz. 2, 5, 10-11, 43, 92, 84, 99, 146 etc.

Besides this physical benefit, an accomplished ascetic is wise and enlightened enough to realise that the body is not his true self, but it is the pure consciousness Atma residing in that body. Such a person is the one who has truly understood the meaning of bondage as well as of freedom. The body is like a prison for him from which he would want to break free. But he realises at the same time that till the time he lives in this world he cannot do so, for the body is the habitat of the Atma. So, when he has freed himself from the deluding effects of the body by becoming totally indifferent to it and its natural instincts to be pulled towards this material world and its charms and then subsequently get trapped by them, he has in fact broken free from this prison and obtained liberation (Mukti). This body would not be able to trap his soul any longer. The self-realised person would not be bothered by what the body does; he would remain like a neutral spectator of all the deeds done by the body. As such, he would not be responsible for these deeds and their results, the root cause of all worldly problems and the reason why the soul remains trapped in the cycle of birth and death. Such an existence is indeed one which is the life of a free man who is not enslaved to any master. He can do whatever he likes, go wherever he wants, and live as he wants. This in the context of Siddhis would be tantamount to his acquiring them; he is enabled by this Siddhis to do whatever he wants, go wherever he wishes, and live a life the way he wants.]

162. Oh Padmaj (i.e. Brahma, the one born from a divine Lotus)! Such creatures (as those who are mentally and emotionally attached to the body and enjoy it because this body affords them the chance of self gratification and enjoyment of the material comforts of the sense objects of this deluding world) die only to shed their physical gross body, but they do not find true liberation and deliverance from it because they have to take another birth again with a new gross physical body. The creature's Pran—i.e. his primary forces of life representing his 'self' and his 'being', the essential life forces and consciousness that represent the true identity of the creature—is tied (emotionally attached) to the body to such an extent that it does not wish to forsake it, and the result is that at the time of death when the body has to be abandoned under compulsions of its natural decay and destruction process which is conventionally known as 'death of the body', this Pran immediately finds a new body for its self for it (the Pran) cannot or does not want to live without it (the body).

Under this circumstance, how can this creature ever hope to get rid of the burdensome encumbrance known as the body; his Atma, which is his 'true self', would remain shackled to one or the other form of the gross body. [This is the called the cycle of birth and death.] (162).

163. True Mukti (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) is only possible when this situation of having a gross perishable body and being emotionally attached to it is done away with. If this body was not perishable and had it been eternal, it would have been the supreme transcendental Brahm personified. But since the former condition is not true, it follows that the latter is also not true.

Therefore, for a truly realised and wise ascetic who is enlightened about this truth vis-à-vis the body, the latter becomes totally irrelevant. With this enlightened view, he regards his 'essential self', i.e. his pure conscious Atma, as being separate and distinct from the body, and therefore 'he' (as his Atma, and not the body) becomes an ethereal, sublime and subtle entity that is a 'non-body'. In other words, he does not show any of the typical characteristics of the gross physical body such as to become old and die. He, on the contrary, becomes eternal, imperishable, subtle and sublime which are the divine characteristics of Brahm.

In this way, this spiritual aspirant becomes truly liberated and delivered inspite of having a physical gross body, and consequentially becomes one like the supreme Brahm¹. [In other words, as soon as the ascetic realises who 'he' truly is, i.e. when he understands the fact that his true self is his pure conscious Atma and not the gross and perishable body, he becomes an entity that is no longer identified by the body but by the soul. And this soul has the eclectic virtues of being sublime, eternal and non-perishable, the virtues possessed by Brahm. Hence, the soul or Atma of the ascetic representing his 'true self' becomes one like Brahm. In fact, these two entities—Atma and Brahm—are the same entity in two forms, they are both the non-dual entity known as the universal, ubiquitous and quintessential Consciousness, the only difference being that the former has an existence at the individual level of creation, i.e. at the micro level of existence in the form of the individual Jiva (creature), and the latter has its existence at the macro level of creation as the all-pervading and all-encompassing Brahm.] (163).

[Note--¹Brahm and Atma are not two separate and distinguishable entities but are essentially one and the same non-dual consciousness that pervades uniformly throughout this living world. The only reason why they appear separate and distinguishable from one another is the way they are visualised by the perceiver. The Atma is seen at the micro level of existence whereas Brahm is visualised at the macro level of creation. For an ordinary man of low intellect and who is ignorant of the profound spiritual truths as expounded in the scriptures, these two have different existences, but for a wise and erudite man there is no difference between them; it is only the perspective of viewing that creates an illusion of difference. These two ways at viewing the same thing might distort its reality but the basics, the fundamental nature and primary form of this one non-dual entity would not change or get affected due to distortions in view and illusions of perception.

To illustrate how this is possible, we can take a simple example. There is only one moon in the sky, but if say ten pots of water are placed on the ground then we will have ten independent images of this same moon in the water of these ten pots. Does it mean there are ten + one = eleven moons? If the answer to this question is an emphatic 'no', then the same answer would apply to the universal truth that there is no difference between the Atma of uncountable creatures and Brahm.]

164. An ascetic who thinks of nothing but Brahm, who contemplates upon none but Brahm, it is only then that such an enlightened ascetic is deemed to be liberated and delivered. Such a wise and enlightened ascetic does not treat his body and its sense

organs as the desired objective or goal of his life. That is, he does not believe in pampering and gratifying the body. On the contrary, he treats the body as a prison from which he ought to liberate his Atma by being detached from and uninterested in the body. He loses all attractions for the body and its charms, and even begins to loathe them (164).

165. When the self-realised and enlightened ascetic becomes one with the supreme Brahm and indistinguishable from the latter, his body no longer remains a mere city with ten gates or doorways and ten avenues represented by the ten chief Naadis¹. But upon self-realisation, this body dissolves its independent existence and becomes one with Brahm and indistinguishable from the latter in the sense that it is henceforth identified by the primary elements called the Bhuts—earth, water, fire, air and sky elements—from which it is primarily made just like the bubbles of water merge and vanish in the water from which they were formed initially² (165).

[Note—¹The body is likened to a *city* because the pure consciousness known as the Atma and the true ‘self’ of the creature lives in it. The Pran, which refers to the vital winds present in the body and which keep the body alive and active, enables the Atma to enjoy its residence in the body, for had the Pran not allowed the body to remain alive and active, the latter would have been useless for the Atma. A body without the Atma is like a dead city.

The *ten doors* of this city are the following—two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, one urethra and one Brahm Randhra (the hair-like slit present on the top of the head).

There are said to be *ten chief Naadis* in the body. They are the chief ducts present inside the body through which the Pran—vital life-consciousness represented by the vital winds and life impulses present in the body which keep the body alive and distinguishes a living body from a dead one—moves while the man sleeps (refer Paingal Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 12 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. They are likened to broad avenues of a grand city in which the Atma lives. According to Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition, verse no. 15-17, they are the following—Ida, Pingla, Sushumna, Gandhari, Hasti-jivaha, Pusa, Yashaswani, Alambusa, Kuhu and Shankhani.

Refer Canto 5, verse no. 2 in this context.

²The entire creation has come into being from one single source known as Brahm. The five elements called the Panch Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky) are the primary building blocks or bricks that are cast from the same original source called Brahm. The gross body of the creation was moulded from these five elements. Therefore it follows as a corollary that the creation can be regressed and traced back to come to that single point. Since the elements from which the gross body of the creature is crafted are lifeless entities, it follows that the former is also lifeless. The factor that makes the body ‘alive and living’ is called the pure consciousness and it is the ‘self’ of all living beings. In other words, a wise ascetic sees the body as a revelation of the elements, while his ‘self’ as a manifestation of the cosmic Consciousness called Brahm which infuses life into this otherwise lifeless body.]

166. This body is filled by ten types of vital winds¹. It has ten Indris or sense organs (five organs of perception and five organs of action)². The body is supported by six Chakras (swirling subtle energy centers)³, and it roams around in a great forest consisting of six Vishayas (objects of the sense organs of perception)⁴ (166).

[Note—¹The *ten winds* are the following—Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana, Vyaana, Nag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjaya. [Refer—Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto

2, verse nos. 77-87 and Subalo Upanishad, canto 9, verse no. 14 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

These ten Prans are divided into two broad categories—viz. the five main Prans and the five subsidiary Prans. The main Prans, their functions and locations in the body in brief are the following—(1) Pran— this is the main vital wind and usually refers to the breath without which life is not possible; it is the vital wind located in the upper part of the body. It is the wind that is exhaled as well as inhaled, and which is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without this wind infusing life in the body no other wind would be of any significance to the creature. It is present in the mouth, nose, heart, navel, big toe of the leg. (2) Apaana—this is the wind that passes down the intestines, and is responsible for ingestion of food, its digestion in the intestines and the final excretion of the waste product from the body—its grosser content through the anus and its fluid contents through the urinary system of the kidneys. This is the wind that moves down in the body and is chiefly located in the lower part of the body—in the intestines and anus, lower abdomen, thighs, knees. (3) Saman—it is uniformly present throughout the body and as the name itself suggests it is responsible for uniform pressure and balance in the body besides equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body by maintaining proper circulation of blood. It is said to be especially present in the ears which are said to be the specialized playing field for the Samaana wind as it helps maintain balance in the body through the semi-circular canals in the ears. It also helps to coordinate the ears and the intellect because the latter would base its decisions on what it hears with the aid of the ears. (4) Udaan—this is the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough. It is predominantly present in the hands, legs and the various joints of the body. (5) Vyan—this wind helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body as well as to ensure equal distribution of nutrients in the body by maintaining circulation. Hence, it works in close coordination with the Samaana wind. It also helps to control the functioning of the other winds. It is located in the ears, thighs, waist region, heels, shoulders and throat.

The Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 26 clearly lays down the pyramidal structure of the five important vital winds. The Dhyānbindu Upanishad, verse nos. 95-99, of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition not only describes the ‘colours’ of the five principle winds but also their ‘Beej Mantras’, while this same Upanishad in its verse nos. 99-100 emphasises the fact that the ‘different names’ given to these vital winds are artificial and actually there is no difference between them.

Besides these five main Prans, the other five winds are called as junior Prans or subsidiary Prans because their main function is to aid the functioning of the main Prans. They are located in the skin, muscles and the bones. Their main functions are the following—(6) Nag—this junior wind which helps in exhaling breath and belching. (7) Kurma— this subsidiary wind helps the eyelids to open and shut. (8) Krikar— this creates the sensation of hunger. (9) Devdutta— this creates sleep. (10) Dhananjay—it prevents decay and deformation of the body immediately after death for some time.

²The *ten organs* of the gross body are the following—five organs of perception such as eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin, and five organs of action such as hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital.

³The *six Chakras* are the subtle energy centers of the body which act as power houses which supply energy for the various functions of the body. They are the following—(1) The ‘Mooladhar Chakra’ is located between genitals and anus in the area called the perineum; (2) The ‘Swadhisthan Chakra’ is located in the groins of males and the Bhug

area of females. It has a 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed and its counterpart in the female is the clitoris. (3) The 'Manipur Chakra' is located in the navel area, is shaped like a gem and is surrounded by the network of Naadis (nerves) called solar plexus. It is also the site of the Sun energy; (4) The 'Anahat Chakra' is located in the chest between the heart and lung area and it is shaped like a swan looking downwards. It is also assumed to be like an 8-petal lotus facing down; (5) The 'Vishuddha Chakra/Kanth Chakra' is located in the throat. To the left of it passes the Eda nerve representing the moon, to its right goes the Pingla nerve representing the sun, and in the center is the Sushumna nerve through which the Kundalini energy rises up from the base of the spine to the skull. (6) The 'Agya Chakra or Bhru Chakra' is located between the eyebrows and root of the nose. It is also called the third eye of enlightenment and wisdom.

Refer Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad, Canto 3 of Rig Veda tradition, Dhyandindu Upanishad, verse nos. 44-49 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, as well as Yograjopanishad, Yogchudamani Upanishad, and Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4 of the Sam Veda tradition.

⁴The six objects of the body pertain to the five organs of perception and one mind = six. The five perceptions are sight (eye), smell (nose), sound (ear), taste (tongue) and feel or touch (skin) + all the things about which the mind thinks = six in total. The sense objects of the material world are categorized into six groups according to these six faculties of the body. For instance, all things that have a shape, fixed contour, colour and form are the subject matter of the eye and the faculty of sight. Similarly, things that emanate a smell are the subject matter of the organ of the nose and the faculty of smell; things that emanate sound are the subject matter of the ear and the faculty of hearing; things that have chemicals that induce taste are the subject matter of the tongue and the faculty of taste; things that can be felt and touched are the objective of the skin and the faculty that gives the sense of touch and feel; and finally those things that require thoughts, imagination, comprehension, rationality, analysis and application of intelligence are the subject matter of the mind.]

167. This body has four Peeths¹ or symbolic altars where the ascetic offers his symbolically prayers to the Supreme Being enshrined in his own self. [In other words, the body is treated like a pilgrim site where the Shakti principle of Divinity is worshipped according to Tantra philosophy. The word 'Peeth' is indicative of this—because the word refers to the pilgrim sites where the Divinity is worshipped in its female manifestation as a Shakti or Goddess instead of the male form as a God. When any fire sacrifice is done, a seat is designated for the deity to be worshipped, and it is also called a Peeth.]

The four Vedas² are like the lighted lamps that show illumination to it. [That is, the four Vedas illuminate the wise person's mind and show him the auspicious, correct and noble path through the dense dark forest of delusions and worldly pitfalls through which he has to traverse during his journey of life so as to enable him to reach his objective of obtaining emancipation and salvation for his soul and attain self-realisation and Brahm-realisation. When this happens, the wise person is said to have reached his true spiritual destination, while if he remains trapped in the cycle of birth and death he has missed his spiritual target. Even as lampposts along the highway not only illuminate the path below but also act as a beacon for travelers who might otherwise be lost in the pitch darkness of the night, the Vedas and the Upanishads guide the spiritual aspirant onwards in his spiritual journey by showing him the correct path to be followed. They act as a beacon of hope and crutches for weary spiritual travelers who are in desperate need of help and guidance in the wilderness that the world is.]

For a wise, erudite and enlightened ascetic, the cosmic ethereal sound called the Naad³, represented by the ethereal word OM complete with its Bindu, is like the grand cosmic male phallus with the drop of semen dripping from it. It is a state of eclectic bliss and ecstasy, and it is a symbolic abode of Shiva and his divine cosmic energy called Shakti⁴ (167).

[Note—Refer Canto 5, verse no. 3 in this context as it is almost identical in tenor.

¹The word *Peeth* means a seat or pedestal for an idol of a deity. In practical life it refers to a center of temporal or religious authority or sect. In the context of the body the word refers to the four sheaths which form the body that harbours the Atma at its center. These four are the Annamaye Kosh or food sheath, the Pranmaye Kosh or the wind sheath, the Manomaye Kosh or the mind sheath, and Vigyanmaye Kosh or the intellect sheath. According to Tantra Shastra, the Peeths are said to be the places where the Shakti (cosmic dynamic energy of creation) is located. They are the following—The first seat or Peeth is called Kaam Roop Peeth, the second seat called Purna Giri Peeth, the third seat is called Jalandhar Peeth, and the fourth seat is called Uddiyan Peeth. These Peeths or seats and their locations have been described below in verse nos. 171-175 of this Canto 1. We can compare these four Peeths with the four corners of square or a rectangle. These corners decide the exact shape and size of the figure because the lines that form the outline simply join these corners. They are also like the four cardinal points of the celestial globe—viz. north, east, south and west.

²The four Vedas are the Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva.

³Refer verse no. 105 of this Canto 1. The Naad is the cosmic sound heard by an ascetic when he is in deep meditation mode. As any sound originates from a source and then radiates out in the form of waves much like ripples created on the surface of a calm lake when a stone is thrown in it, the Naad has its cosmic origin in the one-point source called Brahm. This is the symbolic Bindu which is represented as the dot put on the top of the geometrical symbol for Naad which is also used as a monosyllable Mantra known as OM. The Naad consists of such sound frequencies that are not normally audible to the human ear just like the case of the radio waves present all around us in ether that are not heard by us except for the use of special instrument called the 'radio'. The frequencies of the sound waves of Naad require specially trained neurons in the mind to be heard by an ascetic, and this fine-tuning is done by meditation and contemplation. Ancient sages and seers who did hear this Naad pondered over the matter and came to the conclusion that the monosyllable word OM was the nearest analogue to the sound produced by Naad, and hence they prescribed it as a synonym for Naad.

The symbol of OM and Naad is 'ॐ', and it resembles the sixth Sanskrit alphabet which is a long vowel sound resembling 'Ooo' as in 'boot, root or soot'. In the symbol of OM, the Bindu or the 'dot' is placed on the top of a crescent-shaped moon or a concave bowl placed on the top of this letter such that this dot is hanging at its focal point. In modern parlance we can imagine what it signifies. This dot is the focal point from which the cosmic Naad originated when the process of creation first started (what the modern science recognizes as the 'Big Bang'). This sound spread to all corners of the cosmos.

The human skull is also concave from the inner side, and the brain is located just below it—resembling the 'Chandra and Bindu' placed on the sign for OM. The implication is very obvious—this Bindu or 'dot' generated the cosmic Naad which is heard by the ascetic when he focuses his entire concentration in the head by diverting all his senses away from the external world and fixing their attention on one point in the head, called the Agya Chakra or still higher up in the Brahm Randhra Chakra. These are the points in the body where the cosmic sound waves are caught hold of by the sensory receptors in the brain which then transmit this data to the brain's processing area which in

turn translates this signal as Naad. The skull and the brain are the receptors in the human body that catch the signals emanating from the cosmos just like a modern day roof-top dish antenna catch signals from orbiting satellites to transmit audio and visual signals originating in some far away land to be seen and heard by us in our homes directly. Just like a simple short-circuit in this electronic device can blank-out the signals, the slightest digression and carelessness on the part of the spiritual aspirant would prevent him from hearing the Naad. But that does not mean that the Naad is not present in the surrounding ether.

The reverberation and vibrations caused by this cosmic Naad is very overwhelming for the ascetic and he literally drowns in its sound. The vibrations massage his nerves and relaxes them; he feels a sense of extreme ecstasy and bliss due to this, and that is comparable to the one obtained at the time of ejaculation of sperm during intercourse—hence the reference to the male phallus and the semen dripping from it. There is no vulgarity in this explanation. This analogy is cited to give a physically imaginable and verifiable idea of the extent of bliss and ecstasy obtained when the ascetic reaches the climax of Yoga so that he can hear the Naad. This apparatus is called the ‘Naad Lingam’ in Canto 2, verse no. 6 below in this Upanishad, and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-10 narrate how the audible word is created by this Naad.

In brief, the concept of Naad and Bindu have been employed by this Upanishad to describe how the wise ascetic realises that this cosmic dynamic energy has been utilized by the body to empower him with majestic powers that makes him as powerful as Brahm.

Refer verse no. 178 below also of this Canto 1.

⁴This is also why this condition is compared to the ‘cosmic union’ of Shiva representing Brahm and his own energy personified as Shakti which produced this sound energy called Naad in the ethereal space of the cosmos. It was Brahm’s ecstasy and bliss of self-realisation that produced a cosmic shiver and shook the ether to create vibrations which in turn set in motion the process of creation. In the terms of Vedanta, Shiva is known as Brahm, while this Shakti is known as Maya. According to the Sankhya philosophy, this Shakti (the dynamic cosmic energy and the female aspect of creation) is called Prakriti (Nature) in the context of Brahm who himself is called the Purush (the macrocosmic Male aspect of creation).

The philosophy propounded here in the context of Yoga pertains to the Tantra school of Indian philosophy which is a modification of the Vedanta and Sankhya philosophies. It recognizes that this creation came into being by the union (Yoga) between Shiva (the supreme transcendental and imperishable Brahm) principle and Shakti (the dynamic Shiva) principle. They are not separate from one another, but a unified principle called ‘Shiva-Shakti’. The relationship between Shiva and Shakti is like that of fire (Shiva) and its power to burn (Shakti). In the inactive state it is Shiva, while in its active state it is Shakti. They are inseparable from one another; they are non-dual two-in-one entity. The Shiva is ‘Nirguna Brahm’ wherein the divine attributes called the various Gunas (qualities and characteristics unique to every individual and which determine his temperament and nature) are inherent but lying in a dormant, latent and neutral state. When these Gunas become active and begin to unravel or manifest themselves in the process of creation and its evolution, the same Shiva (Brahm) becomes ‘Saguna’—i.e. with Gunas.

From this Shiva’s cosmic Shakti or dynamism comes into existence the Naad, the cosmic vibrations in ether that translate into sound element. Since any sound must have a central point of origin, there developed the concept of the Bindu, the dot or the central point. The Bindu represented the Shiva principle which provided the first spark of life to set off the process of creation, drawing from the vision of a drop of the male semen which is a necessary spark to initiate the process of physical life in this world. The

crescent-shaped bowl called the Chandra placed on the top of the geometrical sign for OM was the cosmic womb into which this cosmic sperm was dropped. Their union resulted in the first conception and the eventual evolution and devolvment of the vast creation. The two primary components of creation are therefore the 'Bindu' and the 'Chandra'—the former symbolising the cosmic sperm and the latter standing for the cosmic bowl or womb where this sperm was placed.

The primary cell of the sperm and the egg are both single, and they resemble a 'dot' because of their microscopic form. Therefore the word 'Bindu' would refer to both the cosmic sperm as well as the cosmic ovum—hardly distinguishable from one another in their primary form as consisting of a single generative cell. It is their union that creates the conducive environ for producing the spontaneous burst of energy called the 'Shakti'. It is just like two ingredients in physical science that remain harmless and neutral when separate but produce an explosive mixture when brought together.

By extension, just like a single-celled male sperm and a single-celled female egg bring about the creation of the complex structure of the living being consisting of his gross physical body that is visible and so powerful, the 'Beej Mantra' is the seed from which the external form of the main body of any given Mantra is generated. The word 'Beej' in the context of Mantras means a 'seed' from which the Mantra evolved, and it would be analogous to this 'Bindu'.

From the union of Shiva and Shakti evolved the twenty four Tattvas (elements) as follows—one Mahat + one Ahankar + the ten sense organs called the Indris (five organs of perception—ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin, and five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + one Mana (mind) + the five subtle elements called the Tanmatras (the senses of perception—sight, smell, sound, taste and touch) + the five gross elements called Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky) = 23 total. To this is added the inherent 'Shakti' or energy that empowers them all to function according to their assigned duties, and the total comes to $23 + 1 = 24$ in all.

From the Shiva (the attributeless Brahm) principle at the macro level evolved the five Gods or deities—viz. Vishnu, Brahma, Ishan, Rudra and Sada-Shiva. The Shakti resides in the Kundalini, the coiled subtle energy center in the human body, located in the region of the Mooladhar Chakra situated at the base of the spine.

The Jiva or the living being is none but this Shiva (Brahm) himself, but covered by a veil of ignorance and mired by delusions. When Yoga and other methods spiritual awakening are employed to remove this veil, the aspirant is able to arouse the latent divinity in him and realise the Shiva principle inherent to him. In other words, he becomes self and Brahm realised. This is his Moksha or Mukti—emancipation and salvation, or liberation and deliverance. He becomes empowered to find liberation and deliverance from the dark dungeon of ignorance and delusions.]

168. [The different Chakras and Peeths narrated below in verse nos. 168-178 have also been described in Canto 5, verse nos. 6-12.]

In fact, this human body is the medium by which one can obtain all spiritual benefits and find emancipation and salvation for one's soul as well as liberation and deliverance from this world, i.e. one can get Moksha and Mukti respectively with the aid of this body. Since this body provides all these spiritual facilities to an aspirant, it is likened to a temple of Lord Shiva. [This is because a man goes to a temple to worship its deity to obtain the latter's blessings for one's wish fulfillment and seek divine intervention for all his worldly problems. But a worldly temple does not provide the same spiritual experience that one gets if he treats his own body as the temple of Shiva. In the latter case, the experience becomes very personal and unforgettable, and therefore

requires no further proof of its veracity and truthfulness. Which temple is better than one's own body where the supreme transcendental Brahm resides as one's own Atma, as one's own 'self'? Further, a lot of formalities and rituals are involved in formal temple worships none of which are needed when one worships the Supreme Being in one's own Atma. A temple cannot be carried wherever one goes, which is not the case with the body. What a wonderful idea it is—one has not to run around in various pilgrim sites or make endless rounds of temples in order to seek the divine blessings, for the Lord lives inside his own self.

The honourable and revered deity represented by the Shiva's lingam is established on a pedestal called the Mooladhar Chakra situated in the region between the anus and the genital. [Refer also to Canto 6, verse no. 33, and Canto 2, verse no. 6, 10. This Lingam refers to the Mool Kanda. Closure of the Mooladhar Chakra is an essential part of Hath Yoga, and it is called Mool Bandh. Naad is heard by this closure—refer Canto 2, verse nos. 5-6 and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-3 in this context.] (168).

[Note—The fact that the body is the holy site where Lord known as Ishwar is established in the form of the Lingam is endorsed also in Canto 2, verse nos. 6, 8-14, and as the Atma representing the supreme transcendental Brahm in Canto 1, verse no. 72 and Canto 5, verse nos. 2-5. Refer also to Skand Upanishad, verse nos. 10-11 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, and to Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 48-59 of the Sam Veda tradition.]

169. The Jiva (living being) is Shiva personified, and the Mooladhar is its foundation or base. It is here that the great source of cosmic energy is established in the coiled structure called the Kundalini (169).

170-171. The place which is the progenitor of all the vital winds and the basic air element, which is self-illuminated as it is the creator of the fire element and its inherent light and energy, which is the source of Naad (the cosmic ethereal vibrations) and its concentrated energy represented by its Bindu (literally the dot placed on the top of the symbol of Naad represented by the Mantra OM but more practically representing the point-source from which the cosmic Naad originated and then spread out in the vast bowl of the cosmos represented by the hemispheric bowl placed below the Bindu), which is the creator of the Jiva (the living being; the creature) in its purest and fundamental form known as the 'Hans' (a reference to the Atma of the creature residing in the subtle heart and which is pure consciousness and the true identity of the Jiva), which is also the progenitor of the subtle Mana (the thinking mind and its emotional aspect represented by the heart), and which is the place from where all desires and yearnings originate—this place is called 'Kaam Roop Peeth', or the seat from where all worldly desires and passions spring forth. [It is also called the Bhag Chakra.] (170-171).

[Note—Refer to the Dhyana Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 44-45 describes the Kaamroop Peeth.

Canto 5, verse nos. 5-15 of the present Yogshikha Upanishad also describes these Chakras.]

172. The Swadisthan Chakra is situated at the base of the genital and has the shape of a lotus with thousand petals.

The Manipurak Chakra is located in the region of the navel and it is shaped like a lotus with ten petals (172).

173. Oh Kamal Sambhav (i.e. Brahma, the creator of the visible world)! The Anahat Chakra is situated in the region of the heart and it is shaped like a lotus having twelve petals.

The second seat called Purna Giri Peeth is located here (173).

174. The Vishudha Chakra is located in the pit of the throat and it is shaped like a lotus having sixteen petals.

The third Peeth called the Jalandhar Peeth is located here (174).

175. The Agya Chakra is located between the two eyebrows and is shaped like a lotus having two petals. [One can visualise this area of the body as follows—the two eyebrows are the two unfolded petals, while the thalamus and the stem is represented by the nose.]

The fourth Peeth called the Uddiyan Mahapeeth is located on it (175).

176. The Chaturastra Chakra is located at the site where the earth (representing the living creation and the visible world) has its beginning, and its patron deity is Lord Brahma, the creator¹.

After that is the Chakra shaped like a crescent moon, called the Ardha Chandrakar Chakra. Its patron deity is Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation. This Chakra is situated on the water element² (176).

[Note--¹That is, this Chakra has four corners and it represents the earth which acts as the base for all living world as is known to us. The four corners are the four directions into which the earth is hypothetically divided for the purpose of study and helping the creature to decide his location. They are south, west, north and east.

²In other words, the water element is symbolically shaped like a shallow convex bowl or tray because the water assumes the shape of the vessel in which it is kept and it cannot be held in a completely flat surface. So the vessel that can hold water must be slightly curved like the crescent moon.

The Dhyani Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 27-28 describe the subtle heart shaped like a divine Lotus as a Peeth where the supreme Lord known as Vishnu is honorably seated.]

177. The Agni Chakra representing the fire element is triangular in shape and its patron deity is Lord Rudra (Shiva), the concluder of creation¹.

The Vayu Chakra representing the wind or air element is shaped like a hexagon and its patron deity is Ishwar, the Supreme Being² (177).

[Note--¹The colour of fire is red or orange, and the sign depicting danger is a triangle. That is why road signs depicting danger are triangular in outline. Fire is the most dangerous of the natural elements, hence it is represented by the triangle.

²The severe cyclonic storms appearing during the rainy season are observed to move in rapid circular motions, changing directions unpredictably and frequently. The tornadoes or twisters and hot whirlwinds during summers also move in rapid circles that sweep across the land and change course unpredictably. This natural tendency of the wind to move in circles and change direction at will is represented by depiction of its basic shape as a hexagon—which is an-almost circular shape but having corners and

straight lines to indicate that the wind has the inborn characteristic of moving in a particular direction for some time and then suddenly changing course and taking another direction. This is the reason why one feels the wind blowing sharply against one's face if one stands in the 'corner' of a large hallway. The movement of the air is more marked at sharp bends as compared to smooth turns.]

178. The Akash Chakra representing the sky or space element is shaped like a circle and its patron deity is Sada-Shiva (the eternal truthful Brahm)¹.

The Bindu is in the form of Naad located in the middle of the eyebrows. This is the site of the Mana (mind and intellect)² (178).

[Note--¹The best shape that the forces of Nature allow in order to retain everything within the outer boundary of existence is a rounded ball, a sphere. Since the sky encloses everything in existence and prevents them from scattering about and getting lost in the wilderness of creation, it must have a spherical shape. This is the basic principle of physics that when any thing moves around any central attracting entity such as the planets moving around the sun, the path that they take is circular because of the natural gravitational pull of the sun. The circular shape is the ideal shape that allows everything to be under the control of one central controlling authority and preventing them from scattering around, dashing against each other chaotically, or running amok and getting lost in a tangential manner. The natural forces of centripetal and centrifugal begin to play simultaneously to ensure a circular outline.

In the present case of the creation, the sky represents the supreme Brahm around which the rest of the creation revolves. So in metaphysics this Brahm is like the physical sun in the sky, the rest of the planetary system that goes around the sun in circles is like the rest of the creation that revolves around this Brahm. This is the macrocosmic picture, while the microcosmic counterpart would be the Atma around which the rest of the being of the creature revolves. Even the microscopic atom is shaped like a sphere or ball because the electrons must take this shape if they have to remain in their place orbiting around the central nucleus. The sky appears to be like an inverted hemisphere, but considering the fact that what we see is only the half part of it, it follows that when we complete the hemisphere it would be a circle.

²Every circle has a central point, the focal point. The entire existence and the world of the creature revolve around his mind and intellect, because the Upanishads have repeatedly stressed that this world exists because the creature has wished it to be there. Should the mind decide to eliminate this existence, to terminate it, it can simply shut its attention and divert it away from it and the world would immediately cease to matter to the creature. The mind and its other aspect the intellect is like the sun in the sky because it illuminates the world for the creature in the sense that he becomes aware of its existence because the mind receives the sensory signals emanating from the world and perceived by the various sense organs of perception. It then decides that the world and its sense objects are there. If the mind is diverted elsewhere, the world would be plunged in darkness in spite of there being bright daylight. In other words, it is the Mana that 'illuminates' the world for the creature much like the celestial sun. Therefore, the area of the body where the mind and intellect reside is the central or focal point of the body much like the sun in the sky, and it is around it that the entire existential being of the creature revolves. A man without the mind and intellect is called 'mad' for this precise reason because his behaviour and deeds are unpredictable and chaotic. Since every aspect of this creation revolves around Brahm, and since it is the latter that illuminates the creation in the form of consciousness and life, it is a natural corollary that the Mana is the natural habitat of Brahm as symbolised by the latter's abode in the Vyom Chakra and the

Agnya Chakra—the former representing the higher state of Brahm's abode in the sky element, and the latter representing Brahm's ability to show light and illumination to the creature through his faculty of intellect. From the angle of anatomy, the former is represented by the cranium and the latter by the cerebrum.

The Mana is the 'focal point' of the decision making process for the creature. The positioning of the Bindu at the midpoint of the eyebrows is a symbolic indication of the fact that the brain's stupendous powers to think and analyse are located in this region. It is like the headlight of a car which shows the driver the path ahead. That is why when we concentrate and deeply contemplate upon certain thing, our forehead is furrowed and it physically appears that the entire energy and powers of the brain are concentrated at the mid point of the eye. This is therefore also metaphorically called the location of the 'third eye of wisdom'. The ancient sages had visualised that the focal point of the two eyes would naturally be somewhere behind them at a point equidistant from them. This would be the spot where the images formed by what the two eyes see could be synchronised and produce a three dimensional image of the object seen. A three dimensional picture is more clear as compared to a two dimensional view of the same thing. This is indicated by saying that the 'third' eye of wisdom represented by the Bindu is located at the point where the two eyebrows meet. The word 'third' is indicative of the 'three-dimensional' effect that wisdom and enlightenment creates for a wise and erudite ascetic.

The Naad is the cosmic sound generated in the center of the cosmic hemisphere. This hemisphere has a concave inner surface (or convex outer surface) resembling the skull from the inside. The Bindu in this case would be the brain which receives signals from the outside world and makes the creature aware of the latter's existence.

This shape of the skull also helps to concentrate the energy and waves originating in the vast cosmos on to the Bindu which is located at the mid-point of the two eyebrows. The curvature of the skull facilitate this process by helping to concentrate the cosmic sound waves on this point which are then caught by the sensory receptors of the brain, which then interprets these waves as 'sound' called Naad. This is similar to our modern day satellite dishes that dot every other home to catch television signal from all corners of the world and bring them within reach of our eyes so that we are able to have knowledge of what is happening in distant corners of the world without actually going there. This is a metaphoric way of saying that we have the benefit of deep insight into things that we cannot see directly. In the realm of metaphysics and spiritualism it would be the knowledge of the esoteric and mystical Brahm that is omnipresent and ubiquitous but beyond the reach of ordinary creature's receptive capabilities.

The importance of repetition of the Mantra OM lies in the fact that it produces a booster effect and enhances the resonance of this cosmic Naad so much so that it reaches a crescendo and overwhelms the practitioner; he hears nothing, he feels nothing except the vibrations of the Naad.

Refer verse no. 167 of this Canto 1, as well as Canto 3, verse no. 11, Canto 5, verse nos. 27-28, 34 also in this context.]

Thus ends Canto 1

Canto 2

1. Brahma requested Shiva, 'Oh Lord! I wish to hear about that eclectic knowledge (of Yoga) which enables one to acquire the mystical powers of Khechari—literally referring

to the mystical power that comes to an ascetic in the higher stages of Yoga when he can float in the sky like a bird, but here it means the powers that enables him to divert his vital winds and other vital factors of consciousness from a lower state of existence to an exalted state when he can experience the presence of the supreme transcendental Brahm in his own self (1).

2. Shiva replied, ‘Oh Brahma, listen. What I shall tell you now is a secret and esoteric knowledge. Success in it is a long-haul process and can only be achieved by a disciple who has served his Guru (teacher) selflessly and diligently for a period of twelve years (2).

3. This knowledge should be imparted in its entirety and in a comprehensive manner to a disciple who possesses certain auspicious and noble virtues, such as being magnanimous and generous, a disciple who is disciplined and ready to observe self-restraint, and who strictly follows the tenets of Brahmacharya in full (i.e. who observes the strict laws of celibacy and self-control of the sense organs). [These qualities should be in addition to the one mentioned in verse no. 2—i.e. to do service to one’s Guru for twelve years to indicate his earnest intentions and sincerity of purpose.]

This eclectic and esoteric knowledge cannot be taught to and accessed by one who is proud, greedy for material gains, or is lazy and indolent in any way (3).

4. A disciple who is wise and erudite enough to understand the essence and the hidden meaning of the divine Mantra given to him by his moral preceptor at the time of his initiation into the religious fold by the latter and has thereby become enlightened and realised, it is only such a disciple who is deemed to be competent enough to actually benefit from any knowledge and wisdom sought to be acquired by study of the scriptures or by any other means. It is only he who attains success in any spiritual and religious exercise (4).

[Note—It is not enough to become a disciple of a Guru and accept a Mantra from him as a panacea for all spiritual ills. Simple repetition and mechanical process are useless unless their deep metaphysical meaning is understood and the process is done with great faith and devotion as to its efficacy and potent in providing spiritual solace, succour, emancipation and salvation. A Mantra is like a formula of mathematics, and a student who understands intelligently how it is applied can solve all the complex problems that need the application of that particular formula, while a student who has learnt it by rote just with the aim of clearing his exams would fail to do so in practical life. A disciple who grasps the intricacies of a spiritual Mantra is deemed to be enlightened himself and competent to enlighten others about it, and since he is enlightened he cannot be haughty and boastful of his achievements or misuse the various mystical powers that come to him as a result of success in Yoga. He would be humble and pious in an exemplary manner.

Another thing is that if anything is done intelligently, with correct knowledge of how to go about it and done with full understanding of the results, one would be careful to avoid pitfalls and get deflected and perplexed by numerous alternatives and charms proffered by vested interests to divert his attention from his main goal; he would remain steady and unwavering in his pursuit. His efforts bear quicker and better results with less time and energy involved. The Mantras are mystical formulae to harness the cosmic divine energy in creation according to the individual spiritual needs of a particular person much like medicines taken by a patient to overcome his specific and individual ailments.

The doctor prescribes a medicine to his patient on an individual basis much like a Guru who identifies the spiritual problems of the disciple and then prescribes a particular Mantra best suited for his individual spiritual needs. So if the patient is intelligent and wise, he would observe all the restrictions imposed by the doctor and take his medicine properly besides fine tuning his lifestyle which might have been contributing to his ailments. In other words, an intelligent disciple treats the Mantra as a holistic remedy for all his spiritual ailments and a device that can help him to obtain liberation and deliverance from this cycle of birth and death. He realises and has firm faith both on the Guru as well as on the Mantra much like a patient who is expected to have firm faith in his doctor and the medicine prescribed by him. If the disciple does not understand or know the full meaning of the Mantra and what he is supposed to be doing, he would not reap the full benefit like a student who gets a first division in college by learning the text book by heart but not understanding the subject comprehensively and intelligently, complete with its practical applications. The result would be disastrous for his career after he leaves college—what good for example a degree in engineering is if a person does not know how to tackle a mechanical emergency in a factory where he is employed on the basis of his first division marks-sheet! At the most the Mantra would give him some initial benefit and some degree of respect amongst his peers, or it might even provide him with certain mystical powers that come bundled with this Mantra, but that would be limited to worldly gains such as acclaim, a famous name, a large crowd of disciples, pomp and pageantry as an accomplished ascetic and other material benefits that comes with acquisition of mystical powers, but without benefiting his spiritual aim which after all is the main purpose of accepting a Mantra from a Guru.]

5. The Mantra which possesses the stupendous cosmic force represented by the Shiva and Shakti principle, or which is a personification of Shiva-Shakti as a non-dual entity displaying two sides of the same Divinity that is the supreme transcendental almighty Brahm displaying his cosmic dynamic powers, arises from the Mooladhar (Chakra—see Canto 1, verse no. 168).

It is rare and difficult to find someone who is well-versed in this Mantra and competent enough to preach it. It is equally rare and difficult to find someone who would hear it attentively or who has had the privilege of hearing about it and its meaning explained; someone who would understand and accept the profundity of the Mantra's import and importance; someone who would have faith in its mystical powers and potentials as the vehicle that can take the aspirant to his spiritual destination (5).

[Note--The Mantra preached by other Gurus is 'Hans-Hans', but by Shiva it is 'So-a-Ham' (Canto 1, verse no. 131 of this Upanishad) which means 'that (Brahm) is me', and is therefore called a Mool Mantra, or the 'principle' of all the Mantras, or the 'principal Mantra', and it is therefore likened to a 'Linga', or a symbol and personification of Shiva principle itself.

Refer note to verse no. 10 below for a detailed analysis of the concept of Mantra in relation to the Linga of the Shiva principle.]

6. The place (Mooladhar) from where such an eclectic and esoteric divine Mantra originates is called Naad Lingam and it is consciousness personified¹. An aspirant who knows about it, who is aware of its spiritual significance and importance is said to have obtained Mukti (liberation and deliverance) even while he is alive, i.e. he obtains 'Jivan Mukti'² (6).

[Note—¹Earlier Canto 1, verse no. 168 has asserted that there is a symbolic Shiva Lingam situated on this Mooladhar Chakra. This Lingam is the symbol of the deity Shiva who represents the supreme transcendental Brahm in his greatest glory of being a personification of eternal truth, auspiciousness and cosmic consciousness. When an ascetic is in deep state of meditation and contemplation, he hears the cosmic sound called Naad. The shape of the Shiva Lingam is like a short cylinder with a dome at the top and accompanied by a ring encircling it from all the sides at the lower end, a structure that is acoustically designed to facilitate the hearing of this cosmic Naad. The circular ring under this Lingam, called the Arghaa, represents the crescent moon placed under the Bindu or dot on the top of the symbol of Naad which is the sixth Sanskrit alphabet, i.e. the long vowel 'Ooo' as in *root*. The composite structure represents the Shiva-Shakti principle of creation. Therefore, an ascetic who becomes wise and enlightened enough to understand all the intricacies of Yoga and the profound effect of Mantra used during the process is indeed liberated from the bondage of his physical body and establishes himself in his pure conscious form of the Atma which is Shiva or Brahm personified. In this context, refer verse nos. 9-10, 13 of Canto 2.

²The Mantra used to enable the ascetic realise who truly he is, is 'So-a-ham', i.e. 'that (Brahm) is me'. He in other words realises that his true identity is not his gross and perishable body but the eternally truthful Atma personifying Shiva, the cosmic truth and consciousness. A person who realises his true identity as being his Atma and not the body is deemed to have broken free from the fetters of ignorance that had made him captive of the body under the impression that the latter was 'he'. Once enlightenment dawns upon him when he understands the true import of the Mantra 'So-a-ham', this wrong impression is immediately dispelled. This is why emphasis is laid in earlier verse no. 4 on understanding the real meaning and essence of the Mantra to derive actual benefit from it, besides the fact that only an intelligent aspirant can do so because it requires a higher level of intellect to make it possible.]

7. A spiritual aspirant (an ascetic who practices Yoga with wisdom and intelligent application of its principles) who deeply contemplates and intelligently analyses the various aspects of Yoga and its Mantra along with their profound spiritual effects, who does Pranayam and at the same time understands my (Shiva's) true form along with its metaphysical importance and significance—such a wise aspirant is able to soon acquire the various Siddhis (mystical powers) such as Anima etc. [These Siddhis have been described earlier in Canto 1, verse nos. 44 and 151-157 in detail.] (7).

8. Oh Brahma! The mystical formulae used during meditation and contemplation (to kindle self-realisation and provide Mukti and Moksha—liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the creature) is called a 'Mantra' because of the following facts—it has its genesis in my teaching, it has been devised by me and prescribed by me as an effective means of obtaining spiritual grace, it is being directly preached by me, Shiva, who not only personifies Brahm but is also the most revered, acclaimed, competent and enlightened preceptor for the entire creation as well as the patron God of ascetics, it has its origin in the Mooladhar Chakra (because this Mantra is heard by the ascetic as the Naad when he meditates upon me in the form of the symbolic Lingam located here as also the fact that success in Yogic exercises depend upon success in harnessing the energy of the Mooladhar Chakra and controlling it), and because it is the root and essence of all other Mantras (as it enlightens the spiritual aspirant of his real identity, which is the main aim of all spiritual endeavours) (8).

9. [There is a lot of symbolism and dual meaning in verse nos. 9-11. A great deal of play on the word 'Mool' is being done here.] Since this Mantra preached by me (i.e. 'Hans' or So-a-ham as narrated in Canto 1, verse no. 131) represents my (Shiva's) true and essential eclectic conscious form, or it is a personification of the cosmic Shiva principle and represented as a Lingam (a male phallus situated on the Mooladhar Chakra) which is shaped like a elongated root (such as a radish or a carrot), it is called a 'Mool Mantra'¹—i.e. the root for all Mantras.

This Mantra represents the subtle cause of creation, expansion and development, and the conclusion or dissolution of everything in existence (i.e. it represents Brahm) (9).

[Note—¹The word 'Mool' has a dual meaning—it means a 'root' as well as the 'essence or fundamental aspect of anything'. Therefore the Mantra Hans or So-a-Ham preached by Shiva not only is the best of all the Mantras but also the foundation upon which self-realisation and Brahm-realisation rest. This Mantra enables the practitioner to realise the profundity of the spiritual truth that his 'true self' is not an ordinary mortal body but a divine entity that is ethereal and transcendental consciousness called the Atma. The Mantra 'So-a-Ham' is one of the great sayings of the scriptures because it enlightens one about his true self. The Mantra preached by Shiva represents both his gross symbol of the Lingam as well as his subtle form as cosmic energy and consciousness personified. In other words, the Mantra 'Hans' referring to the purity of the soul because it refers to the divine bird Swan which is universally employed to imply something that is holy, pure, incorruptible, immaculate, wise and enlightened has a great spiritual potential.]

10. This Mantra represents the supreme Ishwar (the Supreme Being, the Lord of all creation); hence it is his Linga or symbol. [In other words, this Mantra is the subtle body of Ishwar even as the physical Lingam represents his gross symbol.]

It is called Linga¹ also due to the fact that it always lives inside all the living beings as their integral part (known as the Atma, the pure conscious soul). [There is another interpretation of this sentence. The male genital organ is a phallus, called a Linga, and it is an integral part of the body of an ascetic. The location of the symbolic Shiva Lingam inside the body had been depicted as being on the Mooladhar Chakra which is the center of the sexual organs and consists of sensory nerves directly related to this organ. In the female it is represented by the clitoris. So, the symbolism is obvious. It is due to this reproductive organ that the creation has come into being, and with this symbolism it is easy to understand that the male is indeed a personification of Brahm, the eternal cause of everything that exists. When extended to include the female, it follows that she is the Shakti of that Shiva (male) representing Brahm; she is Prakriti and Maya personified as far as an ascetic is concerned.] (10).

[Note—¹Linga—The word *Linga* literally had a number of interpretations—such as the gender of any thing or living being, the genitals and especially the male phallus, a sign, a mark, a token, a symptom or symbol of anything. According to Shankya philosophy, it is the 'prime nature', and according to Yoga philosophy it is the Mooladhar Chakra and its phallus-like Kanda (the Nabhi Kand) which together represent the Shiva-Shakti principle. It also stands independently for Shiva, the principal creative force and the supreme divine power of creation, and is depicted as a male phallus in the form of a cylindrical structure with a dome at the top and an encircling ring at the lower end. This composite symbol is called a Shiva Lingam and it stands for the Shiva-Shakti principle of creation—i.e. for the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm, the sublime pure consciousness, and

its dynamic manifestation known as Shakti which is the energy of this consciousness at work. The erect vertical part resembling the phallus symbolises the Shiva principle, and the circular ring at the base represents the female Shakti principle. The ring also symbolises the cosmic bowl or crucible where this creation was first conceived, and as such represents the Shakti aspect of Shiva. It also can be visualised as a seed from which a shoot is coming out; the former represents the Prakriti and the latter represents the Purush. This combination is known as Brahm and Maya in Vedanta, as Purush and Prakriti in Shankhya philosophy, and as Shiva and Shakti in Tantra and Yoga philosophy.

This symbolism of 'Linga' to represent Shiva and Shakti principle of creation of the Tantra philosophy both at the subtle level as well at the gross level is employed adroitly in this Upanishad from verse no. 5 onwards to describe in detail its various connotations, especially in relation to the eclectic Mantra 'So-a-Ham' as a symbol of Shiva because it is preached by Shiva himself in this Upanishad, and the Mooladhar Chakra and its associated Mool Kand or Nabhi Kand as another symbol of Shiva-Shakti principle revealed in the body of all persons. These two are the Lings or Lingams of Shiva at the sublime and subtle level, while the Lingam usually worshipped in the temples is the gross symbol of the same principle. In fact, Canto 1, verse no. 168, and Canto 5, verse no. 5 of this Yogshikha Upanishad assert that the Shiva Lingam inside the body is represented by the Mooladhar Chakra.

The Mantra preached by Shiva is 'Hans-Hans' (Canto 1, verse no. 131 of this Upanishad) which is actually a acronym for the full Mantra 'So-a-ham' meaning 'that (Brahm) is me', and is therefore called a Mool Mantra, or the 'principle aspect or essence of all the Mantras' or the 'principal amongst all the Mantras', and it is therefore likened to a 'Linga', or a symbol and personification of Shiva himself.

It must be noted here that the Mooladhar Chakra is shaped like the concave bowl representing the cosmic womb, and over it is placed the Mool Kanda or the Nabhi Kanda which is shaped like the male phallus. The entire structure represents the Shiva Lingam seen in temples. Verse no. 168 of Canto 1 also points a finger in this direction by saying that a Lingam is placed on the Mooladhar Chakra. This apparatus consisting of the Mooladhar Chakra and the Kanda is located inside the body, and its external symbol is the Shiva Lingam seen in temples. Comparatively, the one inside the body is subtler to the one present as an idol in a temple. Since Yoga is based primarily on both the Tantra philosophy as well as on the Vedanta philosophy, emphasis is laid on this symbol to represent Shiva as a personification of the eclectic and glorious virtues of the transcendental supreme entity known in Vedanta as Brahm.

Again, since the pure consciousness is a non-dual, uniform and universally present entity, whether at the level of the individual creature or at the cosmic level, it is this 'pure consciousness that is metaphorically represented by the symbolic Shiva's Lingam that is present inside the body which is taken as a representative of Shiva or Brahm. In other words, the Lingam present in the body is a symbol of the pure consciousness residing in all the living beings as their Atma, as their 'true self'. This pure consciousness or Atma is a manifestation of the supreme cosmic Brahm in a microcosmic form. And this Brahm is synonymous with Shiva.]

11. It is a symbol of all the forms and manifestations that is taken by the ethereal Divinity represented by the Shiva principle. [The word 'it' here refers to the divine Mantra preached by Shiva. As such, it not only encrypts the Shiva principle and embodies the pure consciousness at one level, but also includes the cosmic generative powers at the other level, and hence it is likened to Shiva's Lingam.]

Hence, it is also called a 'Sutra'. [The word 'Sutra' means a formulae or a secret code by knowing which one can solve great puzzles or questions. This is the main purpose of any Mantra—to unravel the great spiritual secrets to the person who is dedicatedly worshipping his deity with a particular Mantra devoted to this deity so as to unravel the profound mysteries of this cosmic entity. In the present case, this entity is Shiva and his Shakti.]

The Shaktis represented by it are 'Maha Maya' (the great delusion-creating powers of Brahm, here represented by Shiva and his divine consort Parvati), 'Maha Laxmi' (the divine consort of Vishnu who is the sustainer and protector of creation; the second of the Trinity Gods) and 'Maha Saraswati' (the divine consort of Brahma who is the creator of the physical world as well as the Vedas which are the repositories of knowledge that is needed to sustain this world in an orderly way; that is why Saraswati is regarded as the patron Goddess of knowledge and wisdom as well as speech and expertise in any particular field) (11).

[Note—The Gods of the Trinity, viz. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, are simply visualised as the same Brahm performing different functions in its three distinct forms, a clear case of delegation of authority at the cosmic level. Since Brahm is a neutral entity and its dynamism is revealed in the form of Shakti or cosmic energy, these three Goddesses are the three counterparts of the same universal Shakti that enables Brahm to carry out what it wishes. In Brahm's manifestation as the creator and settler of this creation in the form of Brahma, this Shakti assumes the role of Saraswati who empowers Brahma with the requisite knowledge so that he can actually set about his assigned task of creation which is a very technically complicated and intricate job. Likewise, Vishnu needs material wealth to sustain this creation, to feed it and look after its upkeep, so the Shakti is envisioned as Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth and prosperity. Shiva is responsible for conclusion, and this indirectly means that things really come to a head when its sustenance and perpetuation becomes impossible, there is intrigue, infighting and strife, and the creation eats itself out like a parasite. Thus, Parvati is the patron Goddess representing Maya because delusions and ignorance are the basic cause for tussle leading to destruction in this world.

See not to verse no. 12 below also.]

12. These three goddesses are invisible and represent the primary cosmic forces of creation that are sublime and subtle as well as dynamic and forceful. The entire world has come into being because of these dynamic forces of Nature; they have created the visible world from invisible entities (just like a mother creates the offspring in her womb, hidden from the external world, and lets the world see this creation of hers only when it is ready to stand up and face the turbulence and vagaries of this physical world)¹.

The subtle and sublime powers of a Mantra used in Tantra form of worship are revealed in the form of the Bindu and Peeth² (12).

[Note—¹These three Goddesses represent the three primary requirements for the visible creation to come into being. The first is Maya—this indicates that the world has come into existence because the Atma, the cosmic Consciousness, which is primarily very immaculate and enlightened, allowed itself to be overcome by delusions and surrounded by a veil of ignorance that hid its true form as an exalted entity. It thereby felt uncomfortable and unsatisfied with its own self and sought comfort and happiness elsewhere. So in its ignorance it decided to create an environment which would help it to gain happiness and comfort, forgetting in the process that it is allowing its self to be trapped in a quagmire.

Then comes the role of Laxmi—signifying the need of material wealth and prosperity to sustain his utopian view of this world as an abode that never exhausts of its riches, comforts, pleasures and charms. Since the Atma is already covered in a veil of ignorance and delusions, it is never satisfied with what it has and yearns for more and more.

The role of Saraswati is interwoven in this complex fabric because success in any enterprise needs relevant knowledge and expertise. This Saraswati is a double-edged sword, for on the one hand knowledge is empowering and liberating, and if misused it can be horribly decapitating, destructive and ruinous.

Finally, extreme indulgence and extravaganzas lead to moral decay, degradation, turpitude and ultimate destruction—represented by Maya once again to complete the cycle.

²In Tantra worship, Bindu is regarded as Shakti, the dynamic aspect of Shiva, and the Peeth is the seat of this Shakti. There is another way at looking at these two words—Bindu represents the cosmic sperm which represents the dynamic energy, potentials and powers of Shiva, and the Peeth would then be the seat of this Shiva energy, i.e. the base of the Shakti, the seat from where Shiva derives his immense cosmic powers and authority.]

13. Oh Brahma! When the Bindu-Peeth is ruptured or conquered by the force of the Pran Vayu (i.e. by the Apaana wind located in the lower end of the body), the ascetic is able to have a subtle and sublime vision of, or experience the presence of the Naad Lingam. [That is, when the ascetic does Yoga exercises by adopting different postures, one of which is the Mool Bandh whereby the aperture of the anus and the genitals are pressed and closed shut in the lower part of the body, the Apaana wind is forced to be incarcerated and get heated and pressurized in the abdomen. This wind would then violently shake up and force its way into the Mooladhar Chakra, enter the Sushumna Naadi and move up to meet the Pran wind in the upper part of the body which is similarly trapped by the simultaneous doing of Pranayam (breath control exercises). The resultant collision and mixing of the two primary winds create a grave howl which resembles the distant sound of a storm which in metaphysical terms is called the reverberation of the Naad heard in the cosmic ether. The ascetic begins to shiver and shake as if possessed by some supernatural Spirit, but actually it's the cosmic vibration resonating in his entire frame that makes him shake like a leaf shivering during a severe storm. The entire process is metaphorically called the emergence of the Naad Lingam from the Bindu Peeth—i.e. it is the emergence of the cosmic Naad as a shoot emerging from the Mooladhar Chakra and spreading out like the branches of a huge tree. The body here is the 'huge tree', and the shaking that occurs in it is like the wind shaking the leaves on this tree's numerous branches. Actually, the vibrations of the Naad massage the nerves in the body, and the sense of extreme titillation that this produces is interpreted as ecstasy and exhilaration by the brain, which derives extreme bliss from hearing this Naad. All external senses are dulled into oblivion; the ascetic hears nothing, sees nothing, feels nothing, smells nothing and tastes nothing except the overbearing sound of Naad and its titillating exhilaration.]

This process of rising of the Pran winds is a metaphor for the rise of the spiritual aspirant from a lower state of existence to a higher and exalted state when he not only hears the Naad but becomes witness to the presence of the supreme fount of bliss associated with it. This exalted state of existence is called enlightenment and Brahm realisation. It brings the aspirant face to face with the supreme Brahm residing in his own self as the pure consciousness and the eclectic virtues of wisdom and enlightenment. This

is called 'Brahm Shammukhi Karan'—or being in the presence of Brahm, or a process that brings the aspirant face to face with Brahm. [The seat of Brahm is said to be in the upper part of the head, in the region of the Vyom Chakra or the Agya Chakra which are located in the region of the cranium and the cerebrum respectively because intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, erudition, thinking and analyses etc. which are the functions of the brain are the characteristics of Brahm. Brahm is also manifested as the pure consciousness that pulsates throughout the being of the creature as his vital signs of life. As the Atma it resides in his subtle heart, the location of the Hridaya Chakra. So when the vital winds reach the head, the ascetic feels an extreme sense of bliss and peace which is tantamount to his attaining the exalted state that rises above the mundane existence ridden with mental worries and all sorts of emotional turmoil. This extreme sense of beatitude and felicity is associated with the state of Brahm-realisation—i.e. the practice of Yoga brings him face to face with Brahm. Hence, this process is called the 'Brahm Shammukhi Karan' or the process that brings the spiritual aspirant closer to Brahm so that he can have a first hand experience of this divine entity.] (13).

14. This (symbolic Lingam representing the true self that leads to Brahm-realisation or Shiva awareness) is easily brought to light or made known to the aspirant by the blessing and grace of his Guru (moral preceptor and Yoga teacher).

The supreme transcendental Brahm is the ubiquitous conscious Divinity that is present in all the three levels of existence—the gross, the subtle and the sublime (14).

15. Brahm in the form of the five gross elements of creation (earth, water, fire, air and sky) is called 'Panch Brahm' as well as Vairaja. This form of Brahm is comparatively grosser in nature when considered against its other subtler and more sublime forms which are invisible and without any attributes. These subtle and sublime forms of Brahm have three dimensions, one of which is Hiranyagarbha (the macrocosmic subtle body of Brahm, and the sum total of all the subtle bodies in creation). [The other two aspects of this Brahm are the Viraat Purush or the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm, and Ishwar or the macrocosmic causal body of Brahm.]

These entities are represented by the cosmic Naad. In other words, Naad is the all-incorporating and all-inclusive cosmic representative of Brahm in his gross, subtle and sublime forms. So when the ascetic hears Naad during Yoga, he is deemed to have witnessed Brahm first hand (15).

16. The supreme transcendental and sublime Brahm is the only and the final Truth in existence. It is an embodiment of truth, pure consciousness and supreme bliss that are eternal, infinite and imperishable. It is beyond the purview of proof and logics (i.e. Brahm does not need any proof to be established because its existence is too obvious to be denied, and it is so esoteric and super natural that physical logics fail when applied to this mystical entity). It cannot be indicated or implied or explained by any fixed formulas, instructions or directions. Neither the mind nor the speech have any access to it (i.e. the mind cannot imagine, learn about and then explain or describe Brahm using the faculty of speech; Brahm cannot be limited to words and phrases and it also cannot be understood by the application of intelligence and rational logics of the mind) (16).

17. The supreme transcendental and sublime Brahm is Shuddha (pure, uncorrupt, immaculate and taintless). It is Nirakar (has no forms and shapes and attributes). It is Nirvikar (without any faults, impurities, blemishes and shortcomings). It is Niranjan (innocent and without any worldly fault or taints that may cause any darkness to cling to it). It is Anant (endless, eternal and infinite). It is Aparichhedya (it cannot be pierced and conquered). It is Anupam (unprecedented, unparalleled, inimitable, unequalled, most excellent and peerless). It is Anamaye (it is healthy, without any ailments, imperfections and defects). It is Aparmaan (it cannot be measured and fathomed; it cannot be hemmed in) (17).

18. This supreme divine entity (Brahm) reveals its self to the spiritual aspirant by practicing of the Mantra dedicated to it (much like constant practice of anything makes one an expert in it). [Since the Mantra of a particular deity is like the key to unlock the divine secrets associated with that deity, when one uses this key he is able to unlock these cosmic secrets and access the spiritual treasure hidden inside it. In the present case, the treasure is the supreme transcendental Brahm symbolising the divine cosmic energy of creation as well as pure consciousness.]

Now listen from me (Shiva) the various signs of success and the process by which this mystical power (Siddhi) can be obtained. [The Siddhi referred to here is the spiritual power that comes with Brahm realisation as well as by self realisation.] (18).

19. Those who are truly wise, enlightened and realised ascetics see that self-illuminated divine form of Brahm in the illumination or light emanating from a lighted lamp, the bright moon, the glow worm, the electric and the stars. That is, Brahm is 'illumination and light' personified. The words 'illumination' and 'light' are metaphors for divine virtues and eclectic glories marked by holiness, mystic and majesty that are so characteristic of the Supreme Being (19).

20. Such acclaimed ascetics who have successfully realised Brahm and have become self-realised are soon able to achieve success in acquiring the glorious mystical powers called the Siddhis such as Anima etc. that naturally come to him with this spiritual achievement.

There is no Mantra greater than Naad (represented by the monosyllable word OM)¹. And there is no greater God than the Atma. [This is because the Atma is pure consciousness and the supreme transcendental and sublime Brahm personified. The Atma is this Brahm residing in the body of the individual creature himself. This Atma is Shiva personified.] (20).

[Note--¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 63-64 in this context which prescribes OM as the divine Mantra for meditation. But the Mantra preached by Shiva in our present Yogshikha Upanishad is 'Hans-Hans' or 'So-a-ham' as expounded and elucidated in Canto 1, verse no. 131. Apparently this seems to be contradictory, but they mean the same thing—the first Mantra OM which encrypts Naad relates to the supreme Brahm or Pranav, while the second Mantra Hans relates to the state of self-realisation when the aspirant realises the eclectic fact that the Brahm to which OM refers is none but his own 'self' as his pure conscious Atma which is like a divine Swan floating in the subtle space of the heart of all living beings.]

21. There is no greater worship than researching about the Atma, (the pure self and pure consciousness). [This is because when one researches about anything, his whole concentration is focused on his project, which is the main aim of meditation and worship—viz. to focus on one's self on one's object of devotion. And since this Atma is none other than Brahm, it follows that by focusing on the Atma the worshipper is concentrating on Brahm. What better ways of worshipping of the Supreme Being can one find?]

There is no pleasure, joy and happiness greater than being perpetually contented and satisfied. [This is because when one has the eclectic virtue of contentedness, one would stop feeling the need to want more, to yearn for more, and then to strive to acquire more of it in an endless cycle of wants and desires and their attendant discontents, frustrations, discords, envy and jealousy.]

A person who is my sincere devotee would become fulfilled and contented by understanding what I am saying here. This would make him happy and blissful. [This is because now he has learnt the secret of his spiritual welfare directly from me, Shiva, whom he adores as his Lord. He would not have to waste precious time, energy and effort to find out the way for his spiritual well being and deliverance by consulting numerous sources, and then go about verifying their trustworthiness and effectiveness. He has learnt the great principles of spiritualism directly from me.]

A person desirous of acquiring the various mystical and spiritual powers called the Siddhis should make diligent efforts to learn the intricacies of this esoteric knowledge, and once having known it he should keep it secret with him. [Advertisement and self boasting is prohibited in the scriptures. This is because ordinary people would be skeptical about this spiritual aspirant's efforts and achievements. They would treat him as a performer of black magic or someone who has gone out of his head by not conforming to the standard and routine way of life expected to be lead in this world which is accustomed to observing standards, routine practices and material yardsticks. People would regard a realised ascetic's spiritually exalted state of existence marked by dispassion and neutrality as being a sign of mental disease and odd behaviour, or worst that he is possessed by some evil Spirit! They would castigate him and ostracize him from society, ridicule and demean him, and generally cause great annoyance to him, thereby destroying his peace of mind. If that does not happen, the opposite is equally disturbing for him—people would flock to him for blessings and patronage, showering him with praise and material gifts, and seeking his intervention to solve their personal problems by using his mystical powers; if he refuses he would be called a selfish man. Therefore, it is enjoined for a truly exalted man who has become realised to shun all such things for his own betterment and good as they act as impediments and drags in his spiritual progress.] (21).

22. A spiritual aspirant who has great faith and devotion in his chosen God and a similar level of faith and devotion for his Guru (teacher) is deemed to be a great soul (for he would be benefiting by the auspicious blessings and grace showered upon him by both of them). All sublime knowledge, wisdom and erudition would gradually unravel themselves to him subtly and imperceptibly on their own in a gradual manner without his making any great or special effort for acquiring them (22).

Thus ends Canto 2

Canto 3

1-2. That which is worthy of bowing before and showing great honour and due reverence to, that which is said to be knowledge, enlightenment and consciousness personified, that which is the origin and cause of all mystical powers and authority, that whose knowledge and awareness provides a man with liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death [1]—it is that divine and eclectic entity which is known as ‘Akchar’ or the one who is imperishable and immune to decay and destruction, it is that eternal and all-pervading entity which is symbolised by the great cosmic reverberating sound known as Naad, and it is also known as ‘Shabda Brahm’ or the supreme Divinity revealed in the form of the ethereal ‘sound’ called Naad, which in turn is at the root of the divine Mantra OM and the entire spectrum of the spoken ‘word’. [Refer verse nos. 5-11 of this Canto.]

The divine subtle cosmic energy that supports the entire creation is present inherently in the Mooladhar Chakra, and it also known as ‘Bindu’ or Shakti [2]. (1-2).

3. It is in this Bindu (the point-source of ethereal energy in the cosmos) that Naad (the all-pervading cosmic vibrations in ether that ultimately translate into sound) originates¹. This is just like the case of a sprout of a huge tree having its origin in a small seed². The subtle energy of sound present in the Naad is called ‘Pashyanti’, and it is utilised by a wise and erudite ascetic to see and visualise the rest of the world around him³ (3).

[Note--¹Naad is a form of cosmic sound, and this sound is a manifestation of the energy created by vibrations in ether. In other words, during the process of Yoga, when the vital winds, especially the Apaan wind is made to activate the Mooladhar Chakra by literally vibrating or shaking it into action, the latent energy trapped inside it is activated to produce the sound much like striking of the tuning fork produces sound as demonstrated to science students in a school physics laboratory. Another example to show how sound has a pinpoint Bindu or dot as its origin is the ripple created on the surface of a calm lake when a stone is thrown in it. The ripples would originate in a single point where the stone had touched the surface of the water, and then the waves spread out in concentric circles, one after another, to far corners of the lake. Since sound also travels in the form of waves in cosmic ether which fills the entire space of the sky, this example would show why and how the origin of Naad was envisioned in the Bindu (dot; a single point) by the ancient sage who had first visualised it.

²This is another interesting analogy. The seed is round and small—almost like a Bindu or dot—when compared to the huge tree that it would produce. The sprout is like a Lingam or phallus coming out of it. One is left marveling at the wonderful imagery used in the Upanishads to explain concepts.

³The Naad or cosmic sound that is physically heard during Yoga is a manifestation of the activated dynamic forces of creation, or the ‘Shakti of Brahm’. The inherent energy that is present in this Naad is this dynamic force or Shakti itself. Taking a parallel from the physical world, the Naad is like the eye of the body, but the eye functions as an organ of sight only because it has the energy to do so and has been empowered by the faculty of sight located in the brain to see. The apparatus of the eye has an aperture or hole, called the pupil, located in the center of the iris, and it is this ‘hole’ through which the eye actually sees. In the present context, this ‘hole’ (pupil) would be the ‘Bindu’, while the

eye itself would be the Naad in the center of which the Bindu is located because the structure of the eye derives its significance only due to this pupil. But when we look deeper we observe that the entire apparatus has importance for the creature only because it enables him to 'see'. This 'power to see' and the 'faculty of sight' would be like Brahm in the context of the cosmos because though it is hidden from view but it is nevertheless the only component in the entire setup that drives it.

In other words, the ascetic sees this living world characterised by the presence of sound as a revelation of Brahm who is universally and uniformly present throughout it in an imperceptible and subtle form. The fact that sound characterizes this world as a 'living' entity as opposite to being a 'dead' one is proved by the fact that there is utter silence in a morgue or grave-yard whereas there is hustle and bustle of vibrant life in a busy city. For all practical purposes of Yoga as described in this Upanishad, this Naad and its subtle energy called Pashyanti are located in the Mooladhar Chakra. That is why it is called the site of the Naad Lingam as described in Canto 2, verse nos. 5-6. Refer also to Canto 1, verse nos. 105, 167.]

4. [The earlier verses had dealt with the Naad that was heard by the ascetic while the mind was fixed in the Mooladhar Chakra. Now the attention shift to the heart region where the Hridaya Chakra or the Anahat Chakra is located.]

The roaring sound heard in the region of the heart is like the distant thundering and reverberating rumble of the clouds. Oh Brahma! The divine Shakti located here is called 'Madhyama' or the one that is located in the middle (because the heart is located in the central part of the body and mid way between the Mooladhar Chakra at the bottom and the Brahm Randhra Chakra or Sahasrar Chakra at the top of the head) (4).

5-6. [Verse nos. 5-10 describe how a man is enabled to speak.]

This Shakti derives its powers from the Pran Vayu (breath). [This is because the breath draws in fresh air and oxidises the blood. The breath also keeps the heart beating as is evident from the fact that the heart immediately stops beating if the breath is stopped as it happens during death by suffocation.]

This power of breath enables a person to speak and thereby enable this Shakti (the Madhyama Shakti of the heart or Anahat Chakra) to move out of the body by the way of the mouth (in the form of the spoken word) and spread its wings to reach another person in the form of the energy of the sound that translates into the word heard by him.

This Shakti which moves out from the mouth in the form of sound or the spoken words to be transferred to another person in the form of words heard by him, is called 'Vaikhari'.

While doing so, i.e. while spreading out to reach other places, it acts like the tree which gives out new shoots and spreads out its branches along with the leaves and flowers and fruits to reach a wider area much away from the location of its roots. When the dynamic energy of the cosmic Naad passes through the cavity of the mouth and rubs against its walls and fine-tuned by the muscles of the tongue when the vital forces of life called Pran (breath) are exhaled through the open mouth, its frequencies undergo certain changes so much so that now they come within audible range and can be heard as the spoken word. The tongue's flexible muscles help to make the jumble of meaningless sounds into meaningful words that are clearly articulate and understandable [5].

This produces various genres of sound from which arise all the alphabets of the language—from the first letter ‘A’ (as in *alloy*) of the Sanskrit alphabet to the last letter ‘Ha’ (as in *hung*).

Combination of letters produce words, and combination of words produce phrases, sentences and paragraphs, and their numerous spin-offs such as poetry and stanzas [6]. (5-6).

[Note—These two verses briefly describe the genesis of the spoken language. See verse nos. 7-9 also below.]

7. All the Mantras, all the Vedas and other scriptures, all the Purans and numerous other narratives and poetical compositions, all the uncountable dialects and languages in existence—they are all indeed a manifestation of the Vakya or the word which is a manifestation of the cosmic dynamic energy called Shakti in its second form known as ‘Vaikhari’. The dynamo that powers this Shakti is the beating heart—or the activated Hridaya Chakra because as soon as the heart stops to beat no one can speak a word (7).

8. All the seven basic sounds of classical music, called the ‘Swaras’ (Sa, Re, Ga Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni) as well as all the various Gathas (narrative compositions that were transmitted orally by being rendered into poetry) are manifestation of Naad¹.

Goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of speech, learning and wisdom, who resides in the mouth of all living beings (and enables them to speak in their own tongue or language), is indeed a manifestation of Naad. [That is why Saraswati is depicted in iconography as holding a Veena, the Indian lute, as a symbol of her singing prowess. Since singing needs a finer tuned voice, special vocal skills and expert command over the language and its finer nuances, and also because the verses have to be memorized by heart to be sung without break as compared to the simple and routine exercise of daily talking or speaking, the most appropriate depiction of the eclectic nature of the cosmic Naad is not as simple words spoken in daily routine life but as the inherent music of classical and melodious singing. This is also why in the Upanishads that describe Naad, it is likened to the cosmic ‘music’ heard by the ascetic while he is submerged deep in meditation.] (8).

[Note--¹This is because Naad incorporates all known genres of sound. There is no sound that is not incorporated in Naad. Refer Naad Bindu and Aksha-malika Upanishads of Rig Veda tradition as well as Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 6, verse nos. 2-37 and Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 80 of the Sam Veda tradition in this context of the sound produced by Naad.

Now let us briefly analyse how the uniform sound of the Naad is broken up into letters and forms what is called speech. When the exhaled breath rubs against the muscles of the vocal cords, it produces a sound resembling the cosmic homogenous sound called the Naad. But as it happens, the angle at which the breath rubs against these vocal cords and the flexible muscles of the tongue help to break up the wavelength of this homogenous sound wave into many waves of differing wavelength and frequencies, thereby creating sound of different tones, notes and pitches. These sound waves are modulated and fine-tuned in such a way that they are interpreted by the brain of the hearer as letters, which in turn form intelligent words and sentences. The Swaras are the basic or primary form in which the Naad is broken into.

It ought to be noted here that the basic Swaras or tones and notes of music are ‘seven’ in number and the colours in the sunlight are also ‘seven’; there is a natural and obvious

correlation between them which leads us to a very interesting analogy. Just like the sunlight is scattered into seven basic and primary colours—viz. violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red when it is scattered by the water molecules in the earth's atmosphere during and after rainfall into seven wavelengths resulting in the formation of the rainbow, as well as when white light breaks up into seven colours when it passes through a transparent glass prism, the uniform sound of the Naad breaks up into waves of seven wavelengths or frequencies which are picked up by the brain as seven Swars—viz. Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni. This is 'music', but when the same theory is extended further we can imagine how the sounds of the vowels, consonants and sibilant letters are formed. To understand how this comes about, we can draw on the example of light in physics and recall the physical phenomenon called the 'Raman Effect' in which the monochromatic light is further scattered to produce additional lines in the spectrum when a beam of light is further scattered by a transparent material medium. The 'Raman Effect' shows how the energy and hence the wavelength or the frequency of the light falling upon a suitable molecule is 'modified and modulated according to the combined effect of the basic energy of the molecule as well as the energy of the incident light during the process of light transmission through this medium'; it is because there is an exchange of energy either way between the incident light and the molecules of the medium through which it is being transmitted. Therefore the modification or modulation is surely characteristic of the molecule of which the medium is made up of as much as it is on the energy of the incident light.

In the present context we can now easily visualise how the sound waves of different wavelengths or frequencies are created and why a single basic sound-form can be further broken up and fine-tuned to form the different letters of the same group of vowels and consonants of the Sanskrit language. The modulation and modification is done by the vocal cords in close concert with the tongue and the muscles of the mouth cavity which have been designed and constructed by Mother Nature with expert sense of acoustics in mind. Different subtle characteristics and temperaments of the speaker which are controlled by numerous elements which determine an individual's uniqueness, such as his different Gunas (inherent virtues and qualities of which there are three main ones—viz. Sata, Raja and Tama), the different Vrittis and Vasanas (mental tendencies, natural temperaments, passions, desires and habits), Ahankar (ego, self-pride), Mana (natural inclination and state of the mind and heart), and so many other incidental factors that determine his personality, outlook, emotions, sentiments, state of the mind and thought processes come into play to decide how the same wavelength or frequency of sound that creates a given letter, and hence the spoken language, is modulated and modified by different individuals to create different impressions of the meaning of the same word. It shows how the same word of the same language is spoken differently by different people, and how it is transformed to mean different things to different people.]

9. When the Pran Vayu (the vital winds of the body, especially the breath and the one which infuses life and vitality in the body) is heated and activated by the subtle energy present inside the body, especially the one known as Madhyama (see verse no. 4 above), it transforms or metamorphoses into sounds revealed in the form of words, sentences and paragraphs during its movement inside and outside the body (as narrated in verse nos. 5-6 above)¹ (9).

[Note--¹The sound is produced when the exhaled air vibrates the vocal cords in the throat. So a combination of factors come into play here—viz. the movement and speed of the air moving in the outwards direction through the mouth, the health and flexibility of the muscles of the throat and the vocal cords, the constriction that is created in order to make

the air rub against the cords with the desired angle and force etc. The Pran wind is aided by the Apaana wind also as these sounds are produced in the mouth and not in the nose. It is to be noted here that the Madhyama Shakti has transformed itself as Vaikhari Shakti in the mouth. Earlier the Pran Vayu was inhaled and exhaled through the nose when the mouth was shut and the man was silent during Pranayama. To speak, this same Pran Vayu changes its path and now it moves through the mouth, thereby activating this Vaikhari Shakti latently present there but hitherto lying dormant. The Apaana wind is known to move down in the body, and hence it creates a sucking action of air in the mouth when it is opened to speak. This is like the filling on an iron-smith's bellows. The 'inhaled' breath is the Apaana wind which fires the oven present in the lower end of the body—i.e. the Mooladhara Chakra, to arouse its 'Pashyanti Shakti' (described in verse no. 3). The energy then leaps up and powers the dynamo of the heart—i.e. it activates the Hridaya Chakra, and through it the 'Vaikhari Shakti' (described in verse nos. 5-6). The latter produces 'sound'. The upward pressure exerted by the compressed winds in the body is the cause of the activation of this Shakti. Since air that is being expelled with force through the cavities of the mouth and the throat to produce a sound which is fine-tuned by the tongue into articulate words is located in the upper part of the body, this aspect of vital wind that is associated with speech is called Pran.

In short, that aspect of the Pran Vayu that is inhaled during the time the mouth is open while one speaks is called Apaana, and the Pran Vayu that is exhaled and which actually produces the sound is called Pran. The Apaana stokes the fire of life in the body from below like the fire present in the oven below the grate, while the Pran is the heated and activated wind that moves up in the oven and makes a hissing and rasping sound as it rushes up and out of the mouth of the oven. This is also why we cannot speak while drawing in air but only when it is expelled from the body—because the wind responsible for speech is Pran and not Apaana.

But it must be noted that both these two vital winds work in close cooperation with each other and do not oppose. No one can speak if there is no energy in the body to do so, and the Apaana wind is responsible for digestion of food in the intestines so that the body is properly nourished and energized. Besides this point, the Pran wind would depend upon the Apaana wind to be honoured as the producer of vocal sound because it is the Apaana wind which heats up the body from below and helps to build up sufficient pressure on the lungs so that the air is expelled with enough force and pressure to produce sound when it ruffles or rubs against the vocal cords in the throat.

In a similar vein, the Pran wind keeps the body alive and active because no one can live for a second if the breathing stops, and the dead body would have no use for the Apaana wind located in the intestines and the lower part of the body. Thus we observe that body these two winds play hand-in-hand and are like the two wheels of the chariot to make life meaningful and livable for the man.]

10. When a self-realised ascetic understands that his speech (or whatever words are spoken by him) is nothing but a revelation of the stupendous powers of his own Atma (pure consciousness) in the form of the Shakti (the subtle energy) called Bhaikari that has revealed itself as the faculty of speech and the spoken word, he is blessed by Goddess Saraswati (the patron goddess of this energy and its revelation as speech) so much so that whatever he utters becomes a reality. None of his words go in vain; they are truthful and bear fruit (10).

11. Since Saraswati is the patron goddess of knowledge and wisdom besides being the goddess of speech, it follows that such an ascetic (as described in previous verses) is himself a creator of the Vedas, various scriptures and Purans (ancient histories)¹.

The Bindu and Naad² are like the Moon and the Sun³, or like the Agni (fire) and the Vayu (wind)⁴ respectively.

Hence, a spiritual aspirant who has the grand ability to bear both these two primary forces of creation can have the required prowess, aptitude and skills to become a symbolic creator of the Vedas, Purans and other scriptures⁵ (11).

[Note—¹In other words, an ascetic who has realised the true divine potential of his Atma is blessed with such mystical powers that he need not study the various scriptures separately to become learned and wise, for all the eclectic virtues that are purported and implied in the teaching of the scriptures in the form of their various tenets, maxims and axioms automatically come to him on their own. Another interpretation would be this—the Atma is Brahm manifested, and since all the scriptures are creations of Brahm in the form of divine ethereal words that are eternal and imperishable, and this Atma is the one which makes the ascetic speak these words by harnessing the Vaikhari Shakti, it follows that the words spoken by the ascetic are the words of wisdom spoken by none else but Brahm. That ‘Shakti’ aspect of Brahm which reveals itself in the form of words of wisdom is personified in the form of the Goddess Saraswati.

²The Bindu means a ‘point-source’, and Naad refers to the ‘un-manifest cosmic energy in the form of sound’ that radiated out in the cosmic ether from this point-source. Therefore, the Bindu would refer to the passive Brahm and the Naad would mean in this context the dynamic and active energy of this Brahm radiating out from this point-source to all the directions of creation much like the rays of the sun radiating out from its disc to illuminate the vast realm of this world. Refer note to verse no. 3 of the present Canto 3 also.

³The Moon is a passive source of light because it simply reflects the light of the Sun falling on it, and hence the active source of light is the Sun. Had there been no Sun, the Moon would not show its light. In the context of Brahm and creation this analogy applies most aptly. The stupendous and astounding powers that Brahm inherently possesses are highlighted in the context of the most fascinating, majestic and magnificently wondrous world it has created using its own energy called Shakti. Had this creation not been in existence, the powers of Brahm would have remained unknown and un-revealed; it would not have come to the fore. In other words, the active principle of Brahm is revealed in the form of the Shakti which resembles the grand Sun in the sky—brilliant, splendourous, potent and fiery in its form, whilst the principal itself is passive and reflected in its own glory like the Moon shining in the glory of the Sun. That is why Brahm is said to be personified grand virtues of peace, tranquility, serenity and calmness represented by the Moon, while Shakti is a personification of energy, heat, vigour, vitality and dynamism symbolised by the Sun.

⁴The same analogy applies to the fire and wind elements in this context. Since the Bindu is regarded as the Shakti principle of Brahm in Tantra literature because it is this principal point from where the primary form of active and dynamic Brahm started to reveal its self in the form of Naad, it is likened to the ‘fire element’. The Naad itself is sound and the latter needs the medium of ether to travel as waves and spread in all the directions. Therefore, Naad is likened to the ‘wind element’.

⁵In other words, an ascetic who realises that he is Brahm personified as his subtle Atma or pure consciousness residing inside his inner self on the one hand, and as the various functions that this Brahm or Atma performs with the help of the gross body, one of which is the speech or the spoken word on the other hand, he is said to be an

enlightened and wise ascetic. Since scriptures are synonymous with wisdom, erudition, eclectic knowledge and enlightenment, such an ascetic is deemed to be an expert in them, a fact metaphorically emphasised by saying that he can create these scriptures.]

12. When one becomes self realised and aware of the conscious Atma inherently present in his own self, the rest of the appendages of this Atma such as the gross body consisting of the various sense organs as well as the subtle body consisting of the vital winds and the mind-intellect complex become redundant, non-significant to the extent that they are as good as being non-existent (12).

13. There is no greater spiritual achievement or benefit than becoming aware of the Atma or pure consciousness known as the 'self'. Such a self-realised person is called 'Atma-Gyani'—i.e. a self-realised and enlightened person who has a true and holistic knowledge of his Atma, one who is aware that his Atma is his true self as opposed to the body. His mind and intellect are profoundly influenced by this awareness, and then the greatest of worldly grief, miseries and sorrows do not ruffle him in the least (13).

14. An 'Atma-Gyani' is able to control the wayward nature of his mind and its sub-conscious by doing Yoga (meditation and contemplation). This is because Yoga helps him to effectively exercise control over his organs as well as his mind; their energy which was hitherto directed at the world is now diverted to the Atma. When this happens, he is able to experience and subtly witness the consciousness himself because all external distractions which had prevented him from doing so earlier have now been eliminated with the control of the mind and the sense organs of the body (14).

15. The exhilaration and eclectic feeling of extreme bliss and happiness, the profound sense of ecstasy and elation obtained by the awareness of the conscious Atma as one's own self is eternal and perpetual as it never fades away. This is unlike the bliss, happiness, joy and ecstasy obtained by enjoying the sense objects of this world through the sense organs of the body because they are perishable and transient.

This extremely exhilarating feeling of Atma-realisation cannot be understood or grasped by mere application of intellect. This eclectic feeling is eternal and indescribable as much as it is beyond the purview and definition of pleasures and comforts which are associated with the enjoyment of this mundane material world, because the latter itself is transient and perishable, and so how can it ever give happiness and joy that are eternal and imperishable? (15).

16. All living beings in this world are mortal whereas the Atma is immortal. Similarly, the supreme Brahm is also immortal, imperishable and indescribable. He is not attached to anything pertaining to the mortal world. [It is to be noted here that this visible world is created by Brahm's Maya—i.e. by his delusion creating power. Therefore, what is seen as this world is merely an illusion much like the water seen in a mirage in hot desert, and like this mirage it is as illusory, transitory and perishable. Brahm himself is synonymous with wisdom and enlightenment, and not with ignorance and delusions that this world represents. Further, the Atma is a personification of Brahm. So, when it is said that the Brahm is not attached with this world in the context of a self realised ascetic it is implied that this ascetic himself is not attached to this world and treats it as a mirage.] (16).

17. That supreme Brahm has no specific signs or attributes or epithets by which it can be recognised or known, and neither is it the object of any sign. It is beyond the purview of any logics. It is Anupam (unprecedented, unparalleled, inimitable, unequalled, most excellent and peerless). It is Apaar (that which cannot be crossed or of which no end can be found). It is Achedya (something which cannot be pierced and ruptured; one that is impregnable). It is Achintya (something that is beyond imagination and thoughts; something that is beyond comprehension, grasp and visualization). And it is Ati-Nirmal (something that is exceedingly pure, untainted and immaculate). (17).

[Note—Refer Canto 2, verse no. 15-19 also.]

18. It (Brahm) is the support, base and foundation of all living beings, providing them with solace and succour, but it has none for its own self and neither does it need one. It is free from all faults, imperfections, dearth and shortcomings. It is free from all proofs (i.e. it does not require any proof to establish its authenticity and establishment). It has no likeness of its kind or any similes that can be cited to give an idea of its divine nature and grand eclectic form. It has no parallels, and nothing with which it can be compared or matched. It has no organs, gross or subtle (18).

19. It (Brahm) is neither gross and physical nor atomic and subtle. It is neither small nor big. It is without any birth (as it is eternal and infinite) and therefore it is imperishable. It cannot be understood or grasped by any of the organs of perception such as the eye, ear etc. and their respective sense of perceptions, such as sight, sound etc. [In other words, Brahm is such an enigmatic, esoteric and mysterious entity that it cannot be understood or grasped by seeing it in some form in physical terms that can be perceived by any of the five organs of perception. For instance, Brahm does not have a gross form that can be seen by the eye; it does not emanate a smell or fragrance that can be picked up as smell by the nose; it does not speak so cannot be heard; it is so sublime that it cannot be felt or touched; and it is not a chemical that it can be tasted and defined as pungent, sweet, salty etc.] (19).

20. It (Brahm) is omniscient and all-knowing. It is all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent. It is an embodiment of peace, tranquility and serenity. It is established in the heart of all the creatures.

Brahm's holistic knowledge is possible with the help of guidance provided by a Brahm-realised Guru. But those who lack this realisation can never hope to know anything about Brahm (20).

21. It (Brahm) is Nishkal (one that has no variations and fractions; one that has no Kalaas or separate forms and attributes; one that has no imperfections, faults, blemishes, taints and imperfections that can scar its immaculacy and purity). It is Nirguna (without any verifiable attributes, virtues and qualities). It is Shaanta (peaceful, serene, calm and tranquil). It is Nirvikaar (without any attributes and qualities that cause any blemishes or taints on its innocent and immaculate nature and form; it is without any faults, shortcomings, imperfections and the like). It is Niraasraye (it has no support for its own self or need any support, base, foundation and help for its own existence and to help establish its authority).

It is Nirlep (i.e. it is dispassionate towards, unattached with and uninvolved in everything). It is Niraapaye (fearless, secure, protected and safe from any attack or intrusion in its glorified stature). It is Kutastha (i.e. it occupies an exalted place or possesses a high stature in existence; it is divine, holy, subtle and sublime; it is hidden, esoteric, enigmatic and secret). It is Achal (unwavering, unmoving, uniform, unchanging, unalterable and immutable). And it is Dhruv (steady, constant, perpetual and immovable—like the legendary Polar Star which is also called ‘Dhruv’) (21).

22. That Brahm is beyond the reach of all forms of darkness; it has crossed darkness and is established gloriously in its own illumination (much like the sun in the sky or the glow-worm on earth). In fact, it is the source of light for illumination itself. Brahm is beyond the parameters and definitions of ‘Bhaava’¹ or the lack of it. The only way to become aware of Brahm is by way of having firm faith and conviction in its divine and glorious existence and its magnificent overriding cosmic authority, and fortifying this belief by personal experience and personal witnessing (22).

[Note--¹The word *Bhaava*’ has a broad and varied meaning and covers such notions as emotions and sentiments; ideas, feelings and concepts; moods and tenors of existence; ways and methods; state or condition of being, the numerous and varied dispositions of existential life; the designs and intentions of the heart and mind. Therefore it means that Brahm is a neutral entity that remains unruffled by anything in this creation. It maintains stoic calm and poise by remaining equally distant from any and all of the various attributes and qualities that characterise this creation. But total neutrality and equanimity does not mean that Brahm is an impotent, insignificant, ineffective or inane entity because whatever that exists has its existence due to Brahm. Therefore, the virtues coming under the ambit of Bhaava are also created by Brahm though the latter prefers to remain neutral and distanced from everything as well as unaffected by their influences. Earlier it has already been emphasised that Brahm is a very mysterious entity that cannot be defined, cannot be comprehended, and that is beyond the reach of logic and intellect. This fact must be borne in mind while one reads this verse.]

23. Oh Padma Sambhav (Brahma)! This great and supreme Tattva (essence and principle of existence) can be known by devotion and faith only. When a spiritual aspirant withdraws his mind from the external world and focuses it on his inner conscious self, it is only then this Brahm can be realised and its knowledge gained or accessed. [This is because the truthful inner conscious ‘self’ is the Atma or pure consciousness, and it is Brahm revealed in this divine eclectic form. This Atma can be known or realised by turning inwards rather than seeking it somewhere outside in the material world.] There is no other way (23).

24. The creature obtains a new body in its next birth depending upon the various factors that impinge upon its mind to mould its thoughts and notions. In other words, when a creature dies thinking about a particular thing, it is bound to take a new birth in such a way that would make the access to that thing easy in the next birth¹.

Similarly, the Mana (mind and heart complex) has a natural tendency to turn towards those objects of this material world which appeal to the creature² (24).

[Note—¹Suppose for instance a man wishes to acquire fame and renown as a scholar in this life but could not fully accomplish his goal, so when he dies he would be re-born in his next life in a learned household or provided with opportunities that would give him

fame and honour as a learned scholar. If one wishes to earn money, he would be born as a rich trader or businessman, or in such a family.

²For instance, if a man wishes to be a scholar, his mind would concentrate on studies to the exclusion of all other pursuits, and his heart would have a natural longing for knowledge. Both his mind and heart would love to spend time with good books and in the company of scholars instead of wasting time in worldly pleasures and indulgences of the sense organs. If he is fond of sweets, the Mana would be obsessed with sweets and not salty eatables. The mind and the heart work together in concert to help the man to focus on the things dear and close to his heart. Otherwise the heart would be constantly nagging him and pulling his attention away from the place where the mind wishes to concentrate. Naturally, this internal tussle would create great anxiety and tension for the man who would be torn apart between the demands of the heart and the mind; he becomes restless, disoriented and fidgety. We then say that his Mana is not under control and focused on the task at hand.]

25. A spiritual aspirant who focuses his attention on me (the divine Shiva principle representing Brahm) is able to steady and fix his mind and his sub-conscious upon me; he constantly remembers me and nothing else. As a result, his individual 'self' dissolves in me and becomes one with me. He becomes synonymous with me, the supreme Ishwar (Lord of creation, the supreme Brahm). [That is, when the aspirant concentrates his attention on the supreme transcendental Brahm during his lifetime, his mind and heart would be constantly riveted on this eclectic principal of creation, and when he dies he would reach the objective of his attention—i.e. he would become one with Brahm. The fact that one gets the reward in consonance with the deity he worships and adores has also been elaborately explained in Canto 5, verse nos. 47-54.]

Such an exalted and self-realised spiritual aspirant who remembers me constantly is therefore blessed with all the glorious virtues symbolic of his being my personified form, i.e. he becomes all-knowing and omniscient like the supreme Lord, he possesses the majestic and mystical powers possessed by the supreme Lord, and he becomes almighty and infinitely empowered like the supreme Lord himself (25).

Thus ends Canto 3

Canto 4

1. The supreme transcendental and sublime Consciousness known as Brahm is one and non-dual. It is not proper to create false and imaginary duality in it which in turn gives rise to schism, dichotomy or illusion of distinction in its many and varied manifestations or revelations. It is this non-dual, indivisible, immutable, steady, uniform and universal Brahm that is erroneously imagined as a Jiva or an ordinary living being who forms an individual unit of a creation having countless species and classes of such Jivas with as many variations in characteristics, qualities and attributes just like the case when one falsely imagines that a snake is present in what actually is a harmless length of rope. [In other words, the numerous and uncountable varieties of creatures that are visible in this creation, each different from its neighbour and each unique in his own right, are all one

and the same Brahm. It is merely a flight of a fertile imagination and a fallacy of conception to treat them differently from one another.] (1).

2. Even as a length of rope instantly appears to be a snake out of ignorance of its true form, the pure conscious and sublime Brahm too appears in the form of this imaginary world that is mortal and gross only due to the ignorance about its reality and truth (2).

3. The world as it appears to be is nothing but an illusionary and deceitful creation of imagination. When its true nature is researched it is found to be nothing but Brahm. This visible world is a manifestation of the illusion and deception creating powers of consciousness in the form of Brahm, and nothing else. That is, it is out of delusions originating in ignorance that one imagines this multifaceted world and its multifarious material charms to have an actual existence which is separate and distinct from the consciousness known as Brahm (3).

4. The notion that there is an entity that is uniformly all-pervading and universally omnipresent everywhere, and that there is a place or medium where this entity is present, or which is permeated by it or completely soaked, suffused and infused by it, is also imaginary. [In other words, since Brahm is non-dual and nothing that exists in not Brahm (or, everything that exists is Brahm manifested in that form), it follows that there are no two separate entities such as the one that is known as 'Brahm' and the other that is known as the 'creation where this Brahm is present ubiquitously, or in which this Brahm has manifested himself'. There is no distinction between one entity that would be the pervading one, and the other entity in which it would pervade. Or, there is no distinction between the all-pervading Brahm and the world in which it is said to pervade.]

When one becomes aware of this supreme eclectic Truth of creation, everything becomes one, single and non-dual Brahm for him. That is, both the supreme consciousness that lives in the creature as his Atma and the creature himself become synonymous with each other. Or, Brahm and the world lose their dual existence; they both become one, inseparable and an immutable whole (4).

5. Oh Brahma! All living beings have the same origin in the supreme Atma called the Parmatma. [The supreme Father of creation is called 'Parmatma' because his Atma or soul or pure consciousness is the one which creates the rest of the creation as its offspring just like an ordinary father creates his own son or daughter. Therefore, all the units of the entire creation are like siblings; they have a common ancestor and carry the same gene. This is a remarkable observation and if taken seriously can uproot the cause of all hatred and strife in this world. It is also like the case of the same image of the sun seen in countless number of mirrors. One observes as many suns as there are mirrors, but does that mean that there are numerous suns in the sky? Certainly not.]

Hence, all the living beings are manifestations of the same supreme Atma or Parmatma because each one of them has the gene of the same supreme Father present inherently in him as his own pure conscious Atma (5).

6. It is this Brahm that bears all names and all forms in this world along with doing all deeds. In fact, the name, form and deed themselves are nothing but Brahm revealed in these forms (6).

7. Just like an ornament having its origin in gold is basically and essentially nothing but gold and would not have been in existence without this gold (and that is why it is identified as 'golden' and nothing else), this world having its origin in the supreme consciousness known as Brahm is nothing but Brahm revealed or personified in that form (and hence it is identified as 'Brahm' or 'consciousness' and nothing else) (7).

8. The Jiva Atma (the living being having an Atma or pure conscious soul) and the Parmatma (the supreme Atma which is the sum total of all souls in existence and which is no different from the individual Atma) are one and the same; they are synonymous with each other; there is no difference between them.

Those who are ignorant enough to perceive a difference between these two are the ones who have fear from this world. [This is because then they would distinguish between two people by treating one as a friend and the other as an enemy. This differential treatment would start off a chain reaction and snatch the peace and calmness of the mind. A person would begin to fear and hate his enemy on the one hand, and get jealous even of his friend's rise and influence on the other hand.] (8).

9. It is out of Agyan (lack of truthful knowledge) that there appears to be a difference between Brahm and Jiva, or between Brahm and this world. Therefore, those persons who are ignorant get deluded into believing that such a distinction exists, and consequentially they see a difference between any two given units of creation. [It is such an ignorant man who would find a particular thing pleasant and the other unpleasant. He would enjoy one circumstance and abhor the other. Instead of this, a wise and realised man would treat everything with the same level of dispassion, noninvolvement, equanimity and stoicism because he would see no difference between them.]

When a person understands and becomes enlightened about the fact that every living thing in existence is nothing but the pure consciousness called the Atma in that form, he stops distinguishing between them and treats all of them as being alike (9).

10. This eclectic truth can be understood by experience and also by practically witnessing it. This can be understood by the following example. When a man dreams, everything he sees appears to be real and true, but its falsehood and imaginary nature comes to knowledge only when one wakes up and sees the reality of the physical world. [In the same way, when one wakes up to the reality and truth of Brahm, the world that he was seeing earlier and which he believed to be the truth and real thing appears to be like a dream—false, imaginary and illusionary. The world that he sees now, i.e. the world seen after he has realised the fact that it is Brahm personified, undergoes a sea change; it appears different from the world seen earlier before enlightenment. The same world assumes a different character, colour, form and connotation. Whereas earlier it was a world of so many myriad characters, colours and forms, each a separate unit and different from the other, after Brahm-realisation it appears to have one single non-dual essential form, and it is Brahm or Atma revealed in these forms.] (10).

11. The two states of consciousness, viz. the waking and dreaming states, cannot co-exist. One cannot be awake and dream at the same time, and one cannot dream and be awake simultaneously either. When true wisdom and enlightenment dawns on someone, the notion of duality and the existence of dichotomy in this world vanish for good. In other words, for an enlightened man, everything becomes uniformly one and non-dual in its basic form as Brahm or Atma personified (11).

12. The concept of there being a seer (the principal) who sees something (the object) through the process of seeing (the intermediary) are the three corners of the artificial triangle-like world created by the three Gunas (basic qualities) called Sata, Raja and Tama. All the three corners are falsehoods and deceptions created by ignorance of the reality¹. For in fact it is Brahm that is the seer of all and the one who is seen. [With the distinction of the seer and the seen out of the way, the third corner—viz. the process of seeing—automatically becomes redundant because with the merger of the aforesaid two points, the entire structure collapses into one single point.]

This Brahm is beyond the purview of the three Gunas; it is un-influenced and untainted by any of the three Gunas. It is omnipresent, uniform, infinite and eternal. It is pure consciousness personified (12).

[Note—¹The three Gunas are basically inherent qualities present in all the living beings in this world which exert their influence upon the mind of the creature and conditions its way of working. In this case, the predominance of one Guna over the other would make a man see something as being good and attractive and useful for him over other things. They influence his decision making process and relevant powers; they corrupt the way the person should actually be viewing the world had there been no interference from them. These Gunas act tinted glass through which one sees the world, and so obviously the colour of the glass would affect the view and the world would be coloured with the colour of the medium through which it is seen. Since the man sees a distorted version of the world, his responses would also be proportionately distorted.]

For example, a man with a predominance of Raja Guna would be more inclined to get attracted towards material comforts proffered by the world but would try to obtain them by righteous means as far as possible as compared to a man with a greater ratio of Tama Guna who would even commit murder to acquire it even without batting an eyelid. On the contrary, the man with a dominant Sata Guna in him would first analyse the long term effect of that the particular thing would have on his spiritual well being and health and then decide to what extent he should allow himself to get involved in it.

The concept of the three corners of the world distorting the fact of everything being one can be easily understood in the context of the prism and how it treats white light. The ordinary sunlight when it passes through the glass prism breaks up into seven colours, and then each of these colours appears to have a distinct and independent existence. One person might begin to love the violet colour and the other would prefer the yellow colour. But a wise man would rather prefer the sunlight as he knows that these independent colours are all present in the sunlight in a well balanced ratio which have been decided by Nature for his all round benefit, while independent colours of these lights would naturally have a mismatched ratio of natural benefits and any one given coloured light cannot have all the benefits of all the other six colours.

The Dhyani Bindu Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 93/1-93/15 uses the same idea to explain why the Atma sees the world differently and why it appears itself to be tainted by the imperfections of the world by saying that the

Atma lives enclosed in a lotus present in the subtle heart from where it peeps into the world through the coloured petals of this lotus, thereby seeing the world coloured by the colour of the petal through which it is observed.

That is why when the sense of duality creates two distinct entities—viz. the one entity that is the viewer and the other entity that is being viewed, it is obvious that the three Gunas would influence the process of viewing. One man might see something with one perspective which would be completely different from the way the other man views the same thing. For example, the same woman is viewed as a mother by one man while the other sees her as his wife and still the third sees her as his sister. Another example would be a dish of sweets—one man would lunge for it and grab it at the first opportunity while the other man would abhor it because he knows that it is bad for his health. This distortion comes only when there are two independent entities, but such a situation vanishes when the state of non-duality prevails. For instance, a wise man would see the nutritional value in this dish rather than its taste or getting unnecessary overworked about its bad effect on his health. He would eat moderately and take a balanced diet.

Hence, the view of non-duality and equanimity is the enlightened view of one who is truly Brahm-realised.]

13. A pitcher made from clay is nothing but clay in its essential form, but this does not mean that clay is pitcher; it's a misconception and the height of delusion as well as ridiculous and incredulous to even imagine that clay is pitcher.

Similarly, it is wrong to see silver in the silvery white glare of the shining inner surface of the oyster shell.

Likewise, to see the Jiva (the living creature) in Brahm is equally delusory, erroneous and misleading. [This is because the basic defining characteristics of Brahm and Jiva are wide apart and at odds with each other. For instance, while Brahm is eternal, imperishable, infinite, all-pervading and immaculate, the Jiva is mortal, perishable, limited with a gross body, and subject to world influences and corruptions.

As soon as the notion of all the living beings or Jivas being images or manifestations of Brahm takes hold, the existence of an independent entity known as a Jiva which is distinct and separate from Brahm would immediately vanish (13).

[Note—In the present analogy, the Jiva is the clay pitcher while Brahm is clay. It is the presence of Brahm in the form of the Atma residing in each living creature that has made the latter show signs of consciousness, life and vitality, because as soon as this Atma is removed from the scene, this Jiva instantly becomes a non-existent and non-consequential entity much like the case when the clay-pitcher becomes meaningless if the 'clay' is removed from it. The 'clay' is the defining element that determines the basic value, nature, importance and worth of a vessel called a clay-pitcher just like the Atma is the defining element that determines the worth and importance of the body of the creature.

But Brahm is not the Jiva for the simple reason that there is not one but uncountable number and species of living beings in this creation, they being so varied and physically different from one another that the whole branch of science known as botany and zoology have still to find all the varieties of plants and living creatures that flourished and walked on the surface of the earth since its inception and would do so in the future to come. If Brahm is deemed to be one and a non-dual entity then it would be absurd to imagine that Brahm is only one of these myriad mind-boggling varieties of Jivas to the exclusion of all others. The same sample of clay is moulded by a potter in numerous shapes and sizes of pitchers, but all of them are basically 'clay' in nature though each is assigned a distinct

name and shape and used for different purpose. But the primary ingredient of all these pitchers and pots is only of one shape and colour—it is known as clod of earth or a lump of clay, and as nothing else. Likewise, though the creatures have so many forms, names and qualities, their basic nature as the Atma or Brahm is universally and unequivocally the same.]

14. Even as clay appears to be in the form of a pitcher, gold as a large ear-ring, or an oyster shell as silver, Brahm (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness) is too called a Jiva (a living being) (14).

15. Just like the perception of the colour of blue in the otherwise colourless sky is erroneous, false and illusionary (because the sky is inherently colourless and the bluish colour that it seems to have is due to the scattering of sunlight from the molecules of various impurities present in it's atmosphere), the appearance of water on hot sand in a mirage formed in a desert is also due to an erroneous perception based on imagination which is false and illusionary (because it is also caused due to refraction of sunlight above the hot air in the desert), and to imagine that a stump of a tree would ever produce a flower is equally incredulous and too far-fetched, to imagine the existence of the mortal, gross and perishable world in the divine and eclectic entity known as Brahm that is basically pure consciousness, eternal, imperishable, truthful and sublime is equally laughable, incredulous and erroneous to the hilt (15).

16. One hears and tells stories of phantoms and ghosts, but they have no real existence; their existence is limited to imaginary folk stories and tales of fantasy.

Similarly, it is said that the Gandharvas have a city¹, but it has no real existence and is simply a figment of one's fertile imagination.

Just like imagining that there are two moons in the sky is height of stupidity and delusions, to imagine that the world has its existence in Brahm is equally hilarious and a stupid and absurd proposition (16).

[Note--¹*Gandharvas* are celestial dancers and singers created by ancient mythology. They are said to conjure up a fascinating world of majestic charm just like a magician does on stage. But it is all an imagination because there is no such thing as a heaven where dancing and singing occurs. The term is used as a metaphor for illusive charm and fascination with something which has no substance and credence.]

17-18. Just like the waves arising in an ocean are nothing but water, houses made of bricks and mud are nothing but earth, and the elements are all subtle and invisible in their basic atomic form [17], this world is also a manifestation of Brahm in its essential form. It is Brahm that is seen as this world. In fact, whatever is seen around is nothing but Brahm.

It is false to say that an impotent lady has a son, or the mirage in the desert has physical water that can actually be drunk [18]. (17-18).

19. Just like the existence of a tree in the sky is absolutely impossible, the world is equally false and imaginary. Indeed, all is nothing but Brahm.

For instance, when a mud or clay pitcher is lifted in hand and examined critically, one sees nothing in it but solidified earth element (as mud or clay). This pitcher is

nothing but mud or clay. [That is, no other element can be imagined in it—viz. it is not gold or silver, it is not fire or wind, it is not iron or wood. Likewise, this world is nothing but Brahm.] (19).

20. In the same fashion, when one observes this world closely and analyses it, one comes to the conclusion that it is nothing but Brahm in its essential and fundamental form.

Similarly, the eclectic notion that ‘I am nothing but the pure conscious Atma; I am not the gross body and its sense organs, and neither am I the subtle elements of this body such as the Pran (vital winds) or Mana (mind)’—this enlightened view is the truthful understanding of one’s own ‘self’, but the irony is that out of utter ignorance and misconceptions one sees ‘physical bodies’ all around him and recognise these bodies as different Jivas or living beings. It is out of sheer ignorance that one regards these bodies as the true identity of the Jiva concerned instead of recognizing the universal fact that the body is merely a habitat of the Jiva and his true ‘self’ is the pure consciousness residing in his bosom as his Atma. In fact, he sees himself also as an entity with a physical gross body and identified with it rather than having the aforementioned holistic, truthful and spiritually enlightened view of one’s ‘true self’ as being pure consciousness that is nothing but the supreme cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm personified (20).

21. Even a person who knows the truth about a length of rope and recognises it as such in the light of the day would be deluded and misled to imagine it as being a serpent in the dark. That is, even knowledge sometimes is overshadowed by the overriding veil of darkness representing ignorance. [In other words, it is very important to overcome the darkness of ignorance if one were to actually benefit from his knowledge.]

We observe in this instance that the knowledge that there is some elongated thing lying on the ground has created two independent impressions on the same individual—one of it being a length of rope, and the other of it being a serpent. In another instance, the same clod of mud or clay assumes two meanings when one sees its manifestation as a pitcher—one enlightened view is to recognise it in its essential form as clay or mud, and the other is to assign a name to the physical shape that the clay or mud has assumed, i.e. a ‘pitcher or pot’.

In a similar fashion, the essential spiritual entity that is ethereal and is known as the pure conscious Atma has been assigned a name when it assumes a gross body of a creature. In other words, the nameless, formless, attribute-less, invisible and ethereal Atma that is uniform and universal in this creation is assigned different names when it assumes a gross body with physical characteristics, each such body different from the other. [In other words, in spite of the fact that the same soul or Atma resides universally and uniformly in all the living beings, we treat them differently—we even go to the extent of assigning two names to identical ‘twin siblings’ so that they can be separately identified on the basis of their independent physical bodies. This is like identifying two mud pitchers on the basis of their exteriors such as for example a smaller pitcher and the one slightly bigger than it, the one that stores well water and the other that stores river water, one that is called a ‘pitcher’ and the other that is called the ‘pot’ etc. whereas all of them should actually be called ‘a vessel or container made of earth or clay’, or better still simply moulded forms of ‘earth or clay’ which has no other name but ‘earth or clay’.] (21).

22. Ignorance and delusion is defined as having the concept of duality in something that is primarily non-dual. For instance, to think that this is the Atma and this is not the Atma is out of ignorance of the reality. In fact, every living thing is the Atma (infinite, eternal, invisible, sublime, subtle and pure consciousness), and nothing but the Atma.

To treat the Atma as the gross and perishable body is as erroneous and incredulous as treating a harmless length of rope as snake, or imagining the presence of silver in the shiny inner surface of the oyster shell (22).

23. Only those who are ignorant and deluded regard the Atma as the body much like the stupid man who believes that the earth is the clay pitcher or the simmering rays on the hot desert (i.e. the mirage) is water on the surface of the desert sand (23).

24. Timber is collected and a log-cabin or a small wooden dwelling is made out of it. Once the structure is ready, the timber is no more simply called timber but is now recognised as a log-cabin or a house or a hut. Similarly, iron is used to make a sword, and then the same piece of iron is now called a 'sword' and not 'iron'.

In the same manner, the body of a living being is created by the Atma, which is the 'true self' of this living being, as its habitat and for carrying out its various wishes. But when this happens, the body henceforth comes to be known as the same living being's identity instead of being merely the Atma's external form or manifestation or dwelling. [In other words, once the Atma manifests itself as the creature with external physical features of a body with certain characteristic attributes and virtues, everyone would recognise and know about that particular individual with what is visibly seen and not with what is not seen. That is, though it is well established that the Atma is the true identity of an individual, it is too abstract a notion and too hypothetical a proposition to be easily understood and dealt with in this material world where everything is verified in material terms and is to be seen and felt to be believed in and to have any relevance, value and importance. It is much easy to deal with a physical gross body than an abstract concept of the 'consciousness' or the 'Atma'. So for all practical purposes, the world likes to deal with this individual in his physical and verifiable form as the body instead of his subtle and ethereal form as the soul or Atma which actually is his 'true identity'. Consequentially, the creature comes to be identified with his body rather than his Atma. This is the genesis of all problems associated with the world as well as with the concept of duality. It creates a deception which is so life-like and real that it appears to be the real thing and the truth.]

Therefore the truth in all the examples cited above is different from what the apparent exterior makes it out to be. For example, the truth is that the log-cabin is timber in its essential form, the sword is iron in that form, and the physical body of the living being is the Atma in that form. Any other thought is erroneous and deluding (24).

Thus ends Canto 4

Canto 5

[This Canto has an uncanny resemblance to Canto 1, verse nos. 162-178, Canto 2, verse nos. 12-22, and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-12. The fact that the same concepts are repeated once again shows one of two probabilities—either Shiva had preached Brahma on two separate occasions or he had repeated the concepts to drive home their importance.]

1. Now I (Shiva) shall further elaborate upon the various concepts of Yoga and narrate the mysterious form of the enigmatic and esoteric Brahm. Oh Brahma, listen carefully (1).

2. The body is like a city (in which the Atma representing the supreme transcendental Brahm, who is the Lord of creation, lives). It has ten holes or apertures (openings) with ten doors (gates) guarding them¹. The chief ten Naadis (ducts)² of the body are this city's ten main avenues in which ten types of vital winds³ move about. This body is supported by five organs of perception and five organs of action⁴ (2).

[Note—Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 72, 165-166 which state a similar thing.

¹The *ten doors* of this city are the following—two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, one urethra and one Brahm Randhra (the hair-like slit present on the top of the head).

²There are said to be *ten chief Naadis* in the body. According to Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition, verse no. 15-17, they are the following—Ida, Pingla, Sushumna, Gandhari, Hasti-jivaha, Pusa, Yashaswani, Alambusa, Kuhu and Shankhani. They are the chief ducts present inside the body through which the Pran—vital life-consciousness represented by the vital winds and life impulses present in the body which keep the body alive and distinguishes a living body from a dead one—moves while the man sleeps (refer Paingal Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 12 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. They are likened to broad avenues of a grand city in which the Atma lives.

³The ten vital winds are the following-- Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana, Vyan, Nag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay. Refer—Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87 and Subalo Upanishad, canto 9, verse no. 14 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

⁴The five organs of perception are the following—ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin. The five organs of action are the following—hands, legs, mouth, anus and genitals.]

3. There are six Chakras (whirling subtle energy centers)¹ in the body forming its pedestals. There are six dense forests in it represented by the five objects of the sense perceptions² and one Mana (mind).

This body has four Peeths (the holy seats where the divine Shakti principle of Tantra philosophy are established)³, and it is illuminated by the light (knowledge) emanating from the four Vedas⁴. [In other words, the body is treated like a pilgrim site where the Shakti principle of Divinity is worshipped according to Tantra philosophy. The word 'Peeth' is indicative of this—because the word refers to the sites where the Divinity is worshipped in its female manifestation instead of the male form.] (3).

[Note—Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 166-167, 170-178; Canto 2, verse nos. 6-14.

¹The *six Chakras* are the subtle energy centers of the body which act as power houses which supply energy for the various functions of the body. They are the following—The 'Mooladhar Chakra', the 'Swadhisthan Chakra', the 'Manipur Chakra', the 'Anahat

Chakra', the 'Vishuddha Chakra/Kanth Chakra' and the 'Agya Chakra or Bhru Chakra'.

²The five perceptions of the body are sight (eye), smell (nose), sound (ear), taste (tongue) and feel or touch (skin). Therefore, the things that are the objects of these five perceptions are the following objects that have a form and colour which can be seen, the things that emanate some smell or fragrance which can be smelt, things that emanate sound and the sound itself such as music and the words spoken by a wise teacher that can be heard, things that have a taste and can be tasted and then liked or disliked, and objects that can be touched and felt.

³The word *Peeth* means a seat or pedestal for an idol of a deity. In the context of the body the word refers to the four sheaths which form the body that harbours the Atma at its center. These four are the Annamaye Kosh or food sheath, the Pranmaye Kosh or the wind sheath, the Manomaye Kosh or the mind sheath, and Vigyanmaye Kosh or the intellect sheath.

According to Tantra Shastra, the Peeths are said to be the places where the Shakti (cosmic energy of creation) is located. They are the following—The first seat or Peeth is called Kaam Roop Peeth, the second seat called Purna Giri Peeth, the third seat is called Jalandhar Peeth, and the fourth seat is called Uddiyan Peeth. These Peeths or seats and their locations have been described below in verse nos. 171-175 of Canto 1.

⁴The four Vedas are the Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva.]

4. The holy and eclectic nature of this (human) body is indicative by the fact that its sign consists of Naad and Bindu¹. It is like the heaven where Lord Vishnu and his divine consort Laxmi reside². It is this (human) body by which one can hope to attain all Siddhis, i.e. one can accomplish everything with this body, and 'everything' implies both worldly fame and material prosperity, majesty, pomp and pageantry, as well as spiritual liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation. [In other words, the options are open for the man to choose whether he wishes to remain trapped slogging in this cycle of birth and death or find final liberation and deliverance from it.] (4).

[Note—¹This body is the holy abode of the supreme transcendental Brahm as the Atma (pure consciousness). At the same time this body is the visible manifestation of the stupendous powers of Brahm on display in the form of the Pran (the vital winds and life forces) and Shakti (inherent strength, energy, vitality, vigour and stamina possessed by the body to perform stupendous and astounding tasks). Hence the body is a metaphoric abode of both Brahm and its dynamic power called the Shakti in their various manifestations. Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 72, 167-168; Canto 2, verse nos. 6, 10, 20; Canto 3, verse nos. 1-15; Canto 5, verse no. 2-5, 13-15; Canto 6, verse nos. 32-33, 47.

This is metaphorically said when Naad and Bindu are called its signs or symbols or insignias. The Naad is representative of Brahm's sublime existence which is most subtle and ethereal because Naad means 'sound' and it has no attributes and forms besides being very subtle and ethereal in nature. On the other hand, Bindu represents Brahm's active and dynamic form as the concentrated beam of energy because the word 'Bindu' means a point source.

These twin concepts of Naad and Bindu have been explained elaborately elsewhere in this Upanishad earlier also, especially in Canto 1, verse no. 167, 178, Canto 3, verse no. 3 and 11, Canto 6, verse nos. 71-73.

²Lord Vishnu is the macrocosmic all encompassing manifestation of Brahm known as the Viraat Purush of Vedanta and Vishnu of the Purans. Vishnu's divine consort is *Laxmi* representing the Maya or delusion-creating powers of Brahm or the Shakti or the dynamic and energetic aspect of Brahm. This Maya keeps the creature trapped in its shackles and a make-believe world of astounding charms so that the wheel of creation

and destruction goes on endlessly and Brahm would not need to have to create it afresh. This ability of Brahm is revealed in the Shakti which enables all this to become effective and be brought into practice.]

5. [The following verse nos. 5-15 describe the various Chakras and Peeths in the body. Reference should be made to Yograj Upanishad which describes them in similar terms.]

The area between the anus and the genital has the triangular Mooladhar. This is said to be the symbolic abode of Lord Shiva (i.e. the Shiva Lingam is said to be established here).

In fact, the Jiva (the living being) is Shiva personified (5).

[Note—Refer Canto 1, verse no. 168-177, Canto 2, verse nos. 5-14, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-11.]

6. [Verse nos. 6-12 describe the various Chakras and Peeths in the body and are similar to verse nos. 168-178 of Canto 1. Refer also to verse no. 74 of Canto 6 which mentions seven Chakras.]

The great center of transcendental cosmic energy subtly present in the body is located here (in the region of the Mooladhar Chakra) as the Kundalini. It is here that the vital winds of life as well as the fire element inherently present in the body get their subtle energy to keep themselves active (6).

7. It is here that the Bindu (the subtler dynamic forces that reveal themselves as 'conscious life'), Naad (the sound symbolising the revelation of this dynamic force in the form of energy represented by sound waves), Hans (the conscious Atma residing in the subtle heart and which breathes air that produces the sound 'Hans Hans' as it goes in and out of the body through the nostrils and throat; the rustling, hissing, rasping or bristling sound heard when one puts one's ears on the chest close to the heart) and Mana (mind, the subtle body of this Atma) have their origin (7).

[Note—This is because the Kundalini energy keeps the vital forces of life in the body alive and activated by lending them warmth and vitality so necessary for survival. It is like the fire burning at the bottom of the grate in the oven, the crackling sound of the firewood and the hissing sound of the rising air are like the Naad and the rustling sound made by the Pran as it passes in and out of the body when the creature breathes. If the Kundalini is cooled down, the entire body has a cooling effect and this is tantamount to death or a comatose state of existence symbolising that life is fast ebbing from the body.]

8. The Peeth (holy pilgrim site) that blesses the worshipper by fulfilling all his desires and wishes is called the 'Kaam Roop Peeth' and is symbolically located on the Swadhisthan Chakra. It has a hexagonal shape and situated at the base of the genitals (8).

9. The Manipurak Chakra is located in the Nabhi (navel) area. It has ten corners or petals.

The heart region has the Maha Chakra having twelve corners or petals. This Chakra cannot be harmed or suppressed or subdued in a living being (obviously because as long as the creature lives the heart continuous to beat uninterruptedly) [In other words, it is not possible to kill anyone by pressing the heart so as to force it to stop beating; the heart would not stop beating as long as the man is alive. This fact can easily be verified and understood in the context of the Kantha Chakra or the Vishudha Chakra located in

the throat. If this Throat Chakra is pressed too hard the man suffocates to death, while on the contrary pressing of the Heart Chakra would only revive the sinking heart instead of shutting it down as usually done in emergencies when attempts are made to revive a patient suffering from a severe heart-stroke by thumping and pressing the heart.] (9).

10. Oh Kamalsambhav (Brhma)! This (Maha Chakra) is also called the Purna Giri Peeth.

The Visudha Chakra is situated in the bore or hollow of the throat. It has sixteen corners or petals (10).

11. The Jalandhar Peeth is located here (in the throat where the Vidudha Chakra is situated).

The Agya Chakra is situated between the two eyebrows. It is an excellent one with two corners or petals (11).

12. On the top of it (i.e. on the Agya Chakra) is located the Udiyan Peeth.

All these sites in the body are symbolic abodes of the divine Shakti (the dynamic aspect of Brahm revealed as subtle energy centers) (12).

13. [Verse no. 13-15 describe the shape of the five elements from the Tantra philosophical point of view and similar to Canto 1, verse nos. 176-178. Refer also to Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 72 of Sam Veda tradition, Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 8 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, and Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 83-102 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

The realm of the earth has a symbolic four-cornered outline (shape). Its patron God is Brahma. The realm of the water has the symbolic shape of a crescent moon and its patron God is Lord Vishnu (13).

14. The realm of the fire element is triangular in shape, and its patron God is Lord Rudra (the angry form of Shiva).

The realm of the air or wind element has a hexagonal shape and its patron deity is Sankarshan¹ (14).

[Note—¹*Sankarshan* is the older brother of Lord Krishna, i.e. Balaram, according to the Purans. The word literally means 'well drawn'. In his earlier incarnation, he was Laxman, the younger brother of Lord Ram. Laxman was an incarnation of Seshnath, the legendary hooded serpent on whom Lord Vishnu reclines on the surface of the cosmic ocean of milk known as Kshir Sagar. Hence, Sankarshan is Lord Seshnath who is supposed to support the earth on its hoods.]

15. The realm of the sky is rounded (and that is why we see the sky like a inverted hemisphere). Its patron deity is Sriman Narayan (Vishnu).

The realm of the Mana (mind) is in the area around the central point of the two eyebrows, and its symbolic form is the cosmic sound called Naad¹ (15).

[Note--¹The brain and its focal point where the virtues of wisdom and intelligence are located, is externally marked by the tri-junction of the root of the nose and the two eyebrows. This is the area of the cerebrum of the brain. When we have to pay special attention on anything or concentrate deeply on any subject or when we are in a contemplative or pensive mood, the eyebrows create a furrow at this point. It is a

metaphoric way of saying that the body is attempting to focus its mind and intellect on the subject under consideration or is concentrating on something which requires special focusing of all the available powers of the brain. This point is also metaphorically said to be the location of the third eye of wisdom for the same reason. During the practice of Yoga, it is heard that the Yogi (the practitioner of Yoga) tries to fix his attention. According to ancient iconography, Lord Shiva who is the greatest Yogi is said to radiate a beam of light from this point, the beam which is so powerful that it can reduce to ashes all worldly delusions and passions much like the powerful beam of laser. This is symbolically depicted in the ancient Puranic story which says that once when Kaamdeo, the God of passions and lust, had tried to break Shiva's meditation on the behest of other Gods, Shiva had opened this third eye, and the rays of light beamed out from it reduced to ashes Kaamdeo in an instant.

The ancient sages visualised that this point would be the focal point where the sight collected by the two eyes would be focused behind them in the mind (brain) in order to enable the man to see things with a sharply formed image having three-dimensions and in a cohesive and clear format. Otherwise, they thought, the images formed by the eye would be blurred and distorted.

The Mana takes the form of the Naad because one has to concentrate one's mind during meditation to hear it.]

16. Oh Padmasambhav (Brahma)! All the places I (Shiva) have narrated to you are symbolic abodes of Lord Shiva. [This is because Shiva is Brahm personified in the form of supreme consciousness, and anything that matters in the body is consciousness. Without the consciousness being present in any spot of the body, it would be dead and worthless.]

Now I shall narrate the web of Naadis (tubular ducts of the body) to you (16).

17. Situated above the Mooladhar triangle is the Sushumna Naadi (literally a tubular duct, but here referring to the main nerve passing through the center of the spinal cord) measuring about twelve fingers in length. It is also called 'Brahm Naadi'. [This is because it links the Kundalini directly to the Brahm Randhra at the top of the head and it is through it that the Pran Vayu, the vital winds, rises from the base of the body to ascend and finally escape through the Brahm Randhra to provide liberation and deliverance to the ascetic who practices Yoga. The cosmic Naad representing the presence of Brahm is also heard when the vital Pran wind moves up in it. In other words, this Sushumna Naadi helps an ascetic to become Brahm-realised, and hence the name. The immense significance of this Brahm or Sushumna Naadi has been highlighted in Canto 6, verse nos. 4-19, 22, 35-47 of this Upanishad.]

It is believed that it is like a bamboo which has been split into two at its base (17).

[Note—There are many Yoga Upanishads that describe the Naadis, e.g. (i) Sam Veda's Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 5-22 ½, 35-42, 46-47, Canto 5; and Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 15-21. (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 67-76, 88-89, 99. (iii) Krishna Yajur Veda's Kshuriko, verse nos. 8-20; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 23-30; Yog Tattva Upanishad; Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 50-60.]

18. On both the side of it are the two Naadis called Ida and Pingla which go up to the nostrils (18).

19. The Naadi on the left of Sushumna is Ida, and the vital wind that moves in it has a golden (Hem) hue or shade (i.e. it is of a yellowish tinge)¹.

To the right of Sushumna is the Pingla Naadi which represents the Sun God. [That is, the vital wind that blows through it has the vitality and energy that is equivalent to that of the sun.]² (19).

[Note--¹According to Dhyānbindu Upanishad, verse nos. 95 of the Krishna Yajur Veda, the vital wind which has this colour is the Apaan wind. To quote—"The Beej or seed letter of the Apaan wind (the primary air which moves downwards in the body and helps in food intake and its movement through the intestines, its digestion and elimination from the body) is the Sanskrit alphabet 'Ra'. It has the hue of *golden yellow* resembling the brilliant sun, and represents the fire element."

²By saying that the vital wind passing through the Pingla represents the sun and the fact that the sun is like a hot piece of gold and yellow in colour, it is implied that both the Naadis are equally important and carry the vital life forces in them. This is a very obvious observation because one breathes through both the nostrils and both are equally important for the normal health of the man. Even if one of the nostrils is clogged as during severe colds, notwithstanding which, the body feels suffocated. Further, during the process of Pranayam or breath control exercise, the inhalation and exhalation of air, called Purak and Rechak respectively, are done alternately through the left nostril and right nostril, i.e. through the Ida and Pingla Naadis respectively.

The great importance of these three primary Naadis have been elaborately described in the context of Pranayam in Canto 1, verse nos. 90-102 and 116-120.]

20. In the navel region there is a Naadi called Vilambini. It is from here (navel) that all the Naadis originate—both the ones that go upwards and the ones that go downwards in the body (20).

21. This clutch of Naadis in the region of the navel is called the Naadi Chakra, and it is like the egg of a hen.

The two Naadis called Gandhari and Hast-Jivaha originate from it and go up to the two eyes (thereby controlling the function of seeing) (21).

22. The two Naadis called Pusha and Alambusa originate from there and go up to the two ears (thereby controlling the function of hearing).

The great Naadi called Shura rises from here and goes up to the center of the two eyebrows. [Hence, this Naadi helps in concentration of attention and focusing of the mind, especially during meditation. It also helps the ascetic in self realisation when it is said that the third eye of wisdom located in this spot is opened.] (22).

23. The Vishwodara Naadi is also located there, and it helps to take in all the four types of foods¹ (by creating a taste for them and helping in their digestion). [That is, this Naadi controls the entire function of digestion and taste.]

The Naadi called Saraswati rises from here and goes up to the tongue (thereby controlling the function of speaking) (23).

24. The Naadi called Raka also has its seat here (Nabhi Chakra). It creates the strength and the ability to drink. [Hence, it controls the function of thirst and the ability to drink and hold this drink inside the body without immediately vomiting it out.]

Besides this function, it creates hunger and clears mucous from the nostrils. [Therefore, it has a direct role to play in colds and catarrhs on the one hand, and the general ability to eat and digest food on the other hand.] (24).

25. The Naadi called Shankhini originates here (Nabhi Chakra) and goes up to the throat and faces downwards there, pointing to the place of its origin (navel). It helps to take the nutrients of the food eaten to the mind (brain). [Hence, it provides nourishment to the brain and controls its proper health and functioning.] (25).

26. There are three Naadis that go downwards from the navel. Out of them, the Naadi named Kuhu, helps in elimination of stool, and the one named Vaaruni helps in passage of urine (26).

27. The Naadi named Chitra goes up to the Siwani (the suture between the male genital and the anus) and controls the discharge of sperms (semen). [Therefore, it controls sexual behaviour, male potency and virility.]

I have described the Naadi Chakra (the network of Naadis) to you. Now listen to what constitutes Bindu (27).

28. Brahm, in its dynamic form and active principle is represented by the word Bindu (a dot or point source of energy or Shakti). This Brahm has three types of bodies—viz. the gross, the subtle, and the sublime and transcendental.

The gross body of this Brahm is the 'Bindu' (drop) of semen. [This is because the sperm in this drop or 'Bindu' of semen has all the vital life-infusing capacity and ability that is the hallmark of Brahm. The semen is the gross body of the sperm just like the gross body of the creature which harbours the vital spark of life-consciousness in the form of the Atma.]

The subtle body of this Brahm is the 'Bindu' manifested as the Shakti or stupendous energy and life giving vitality present in the form of the five legendary Fires of creation called 'Panch-Agni'¹ (28).

[Note—¹The five cosmic holy fires that reveal the astounding active dynamism of Brahm are called Pancha-Agni. They have been elaborately described in *Chandogya Upanishad*, canto 4, section 10 to 13. There are the following—(a) 'Garhyapatya' (गार्हपत्य—the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice), (b) 'Dakshinagni' (दक्षिणाग्नि—the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end), (c) 'Ahawaniya' (आहवनीय—the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice), (d) 'Sabhya' (सभ्य—the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit) and (e) 'Awasathya' (आवसथ्य—the fire of the later Smriti period).

However, the present Upanishad enumerates a set of different five Fires as follows in verse nos. 29-32.]

29. The sublime form of Brahm transcends all these forms and definitions. It is like the divine elixir of life called 'Som' (the sanctified liquid drunk during holy fire sacrifices and offered to Gods as an offering, the one which provides the Gods with immortality, and the one which is stored in the moon as the heavenly Amrit, the ambrosia that is the eternal drink of life and bliss).

This Brahm is supreme and transcendental. It is ubiquitous and quintessential in creation. It is the universal witness of everything. It is steady and unequivocally sublime in its divine form, and is eternally exalted.

The ‘Kalagni’ (one of the forms of Fire, especially the one which is said to be burning in hell and which burns everything at the time of doomsday) is located below in the nether worlds called the Patal (29).

30. The Fire present (burning) inside the body is called ‘Samulaagni’¹. This creates the Naad. [That is, the roar of this fire burning inside the body is heard in the form of a sound compared to the cosmic sound called Naad. It is like the distant roar of an ocean or the one heard when wild fires rage in the forest. It is caused when the air is heated and a strong breeze is kicked up due to the fire.]

The Fire called ‘Vadvaagni’ (also called ‘Badvaanal’) is present in the bones of the body² (30).

[Note--¹According to Garbho-panishad, paragraph 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the body of the living organism is called ‘Deha’ or body because it harbours the Fire element in it. It is called ‘Samul’ because it originates in the Moolkand located in the lower part of the body in close association of the Mooladhar Chakra and Kundalini. Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 168, 177, Canto 2, verse nos. 6, 10-13, and Canto 5, verse nos. 5-6 in this context. This fire supports life and vitality in the body, and in its absence the body would freeze to death just like the absence of the Vadvaagani would freeze the earth into a lifeless barren stretch of wilderness.

²On the earth, it is the fire present in the bottom of the ocean and all freshwater lakes, keeping them warm and supporting an entire aquatic eco-system. The Vadvaagni is responsible for keeping the bowls of the earth hot so much so that the core of the earth is molten lava. The rocks found inside the earth’s crusts have been hardened over millions of years due to pressure and the heat of this Vadvaagni because the initial soft crusts of clay, mud and dust were baked and solidified as rocks. Since this fire is stronger near the center of the earth and gradually cools down as one moves up, the core of earth is molten while the upper most layers are soft earth of varying softness, and the intermediary layers are hard and black in varying degrees giving rise to a wide array of minerals such as coal, iron, gold etc. No wonder then that the hardest element in existence, viz. diamond, is also found underground, much below the upper cooler strata of earth, where heat and pressure had compacted the rock into most dense and hardened textures. The presence of fire underground in the deep belly of the earth is evident when we draw water from bore-wells in winter; while the atmosphere is freezing cold, this water would be comfortably warm and rejuvenating.]

31. That Fire which is latently present in the rocks (e.g. coal) and wood (e.g. hard-wood) is the one that is present in the bones. This Fire which is present in the earth is the one which is present also in the bones (31).

[Note—Here, the bones are likened to the rocks and hard-wood that support the earth and prevent its collapse. The implication is obvious because the bones support the gross structure of the body just like rocks and hard-wood found in earth support the softer upper layers and prevent the earth from being squeezed and distorted out of shape under various natural pressures and other factors such as meteor strikes and cosmic winds that continue to shower upon earth unpredictably. The rocks have managed to keep the earth maintain its shape even after 4.5-5 billion years of its existence, and after its core is being constantly made hollow by mineral extraction and all kinds of wanton exploitation done

by men for his vested selfish interests without bothering for the consequences on a long-term basis. Had there been no bones, the body of the man would be no different from, say, that of an amoeba or sponge. All the internal organs are held in place because the bones maintain the exterior shape and act like a safe cage for them.]

32. The powerful Fire in the form of the potent energy of the 'Electric' lives in the sky in the form of lightening. This fire is the one that lives and charges the inner self of all living beings¹.

The form that the Fire takes in the sky as the 'Sun' (the cosmic cauldron of fire) is the one that lives and charges the navel² (32).

[Note—¹The inner self is the Atma which is the pure consciousness residing in the bosom of all living beings, and without which no man can live. The abode of the Atma has been said to be the subtle heart where there is a subtle Lotus in which this Atma actually resides. The heart is known to beat continuously, and it is a medical fact that this beating of the heart is due to a subtle electrical current passing through its muscles. When the heart becomes weak, doctors implant heart pacers or other forms of mechanical devices running on batteries that supply the necessary electric stimuli to the muscles of the heart. The presence of electric current in the heart enables its beating to be monitored by the ECG machines. Similarly, the functioning of the brain also runs on subtle supply of electric currents, and the flow of impulses in the wide network of nerves is also like the flow of electric in an electronic gadget having circuits and wires.

In brief, the 'consciousness' present inside the body is like the 'electric' present in the sky as the lightening. The presence of 'fire' in its most potent form in lightening is very evident when a lightening strike during severe storms can reduce to ashes anything in spite of the fact that it is heavily drenched and soaked in water and should normally escape being burnt by ordinary fires on earth.

²That is why the navel is said to be the symbolic subtle abode of the Sun God in the body in the form of the Nabhi Chakra or the Manipur Chakra, the whirling energy center located in the region of the navel. It is to be noted here that all the Naadis also have their center of origin in the region of the navel, in the Nabhi Kand—refer Yogchudamni Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition, verse nos. 13-17. These Naadis would then resemble the rays of the sun which have their origin in the latter and radiate out to all parts of the world. The sun as a metaphor of life and Brahm is depicted in the form of the solar system where all the planets revolve around the central hub called the sun, and their existence and place in the solar system is determined by the continued presence of the sun. This is the picture at the macro level, while the navel representing the sun and the cluster of Naadis supporting life in the body of an individual symbolising the sun's rays would be the picture at the micro level. Just like the rays of the sun not only illuminate the world but also infuses life, energy and warmth in it, the Naadis carry consciousness to all corners of the body and makes the latter alive and active.]

33. The Sun appears to rain down the 'fire of hell' causing death and destruction (because of its scorching heat that reduces everything to cinders during hot summers and even causes wild forest fires). On the contrary, the moon rains down the soothing elixir of life in the form of its moonlight. This moon symbolically lives in the base (pit) of the throat and faces downwards to pour the nectar of life to soothe the creature. [When a man is very thirsty, he gulps down plain mucous to calm down his parched throat a bit. The Moon is the patron God of passions and love, and its manifestation is the semen which is cool and mucous-like. Sentiments and emotions are also controlled by the Moon God,

and that is why when one becomes emotional and sentimental, mucous seems to well-up and chock the throat.] (33).

34. The Bindu, the symbolic center of divine wisdom and spiritual enlightenment situated in the center of the two eyebrows, is like pure crystal. It is said to be the subtle form of Lord Vishnu (34).

35. Those wise ones who remember the essential meaning of these symbolic five forms of the Fire called Panch-Agni are deemed to be contented as having eaten and drunk to their heart's content and wanting nothing more. They are deemed to be happy and fulfilled as one feels when he has successfully done a great fire sacrifice. There is no doubt about it (35).

[Note—This is because these five fires represent the energy of Brahm in its entirety—the gross form as the fire of the earth and bones, the subtle form as the fire of the Atma and Electric, and the sublime form as the fire of enlightenment and wisdom represented by the Bindu in the center of the eyebrows. Besides this, they have also understood that sins create the fire of hell represented by the fire of the netherworld and sun, while goodness creates bliss and peace represented by the elixir pouring out of the moon.]

36. The spiritual aspirant should prepare himself by resting and purifying (detoxifying) his body by first sleeping comfortably (i.e. having adequate sleep so that he feels refreshed and does not dose off or feel lethargic during practice of Yoga) and then eating moderately and easily digestible food (so that he does not either feel hungry or bloated and drowsy). Then he should sit in a comfortable Aasan (sitting posture of Yoga) (36).

37. He should clean his vital wind called the Pran Vayu (inhaled and exhaled winds) by diligently doing Pranayam involving the three steps of Purak (inhalation), Kumbhak (holding of breath inside the body) and Rechak (exhalation). [The entire process has been described in Canto 1.]

Then he should worship the hidden Shakti (subtle energy) present in the Mool (i.e. the Mooladhar Chakra) by pressing and constricting the anus, i.e. by practicing the Mool Bandh¹ (37).

[Note—¹This Mool Bandh is described in detail in the following Upanishads—Yogchudamani, verse nos. 46-47; Dhyani Bindu, verse nos. 73-76; and the present Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 104-105.]

38. Next, he should practice the Uddiyan Bandh¹ in the region of the body between the navel and the genital. This helps the aspirant to lift his inner-self, i.e. his vital winds present inside the body from the lower half to the upper part where the Uddiyan Peeth is located (between the eyebrows) (38).

[Note—¹This Uddiyan Bandh is described in detail in the following Upanishads—Yogchudamani, verse nos. 48-49; Dhyani Bindu, verse nos. 73-76; and the present Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 106-107.]

39. To constrict the throat is called Jalandhar Bandh¹. Next, one should practice the Khechari Mudra² with full concentration (39).

[Note—¹This Jalandhar Bandh is described in detail in the following Upanishads—Yogchudamani, verse nos. 50-51; Dhyan Bindu, verse nos. 77-78½; and this present Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 109-111.

²The Khechhari Mudra has also been described in Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 117-122 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

40. In the Khechhari Mudra, the tongue is inverted and pushed up the back of the upper palate into the base of the skull. The eyesight is fixed in the center of the eyebrows (40).

41. The practitioner of Khechhari Mudra sits with his head bowed. Because of the stupendous powers and strengths obtained by doing this Yoga exercise, his Amrit Tattva (referring to the semen) becomes so strong and powerful that even if it is put in the fire it cannot be destroyed. The wind force¹ is also not able to sway him (41).

[Note—¹The wind is considered as one of the strongest forces in Nature as evidenced by the bevy of destruction caused by severe storms in their wake. In the case of the body, the wind force is represented by the ten vital winds present inside the creature's body. These winds together are responsible for functioning of the body in totality. The meaning of this verse is that the practitioner of Yoga who does the Khechhari Mudra is able to control his own body to such an extent that no Natural forces or natural urges can overcome him.]

42. He does not have to suffer from excessive hunger, thirst, sleep and laziness. The practitioner of Khechhari Mudra of Yoga has not to fear from death (because he would have had gained full control of his vital winds or Prans, and therefore can decide when the Pran would leave the body or whether they should leave it or not, thus effectively overcoming death because death occurs when the life giving vital wind called Pran leaves the body) (42).

43. Then the ascetic rises to establish himself in the Uddiyan Peeth (the center of the eyebrows—refer verse no. 11-12 above) and reaches the exalted and sublime state of existence which resembles the vastness of the open heaven-like sky. This state has no support and needs not one either. It is pure and corruption free. It is like having reached the divine abode of Lord Vishnu (i.e. it is the state of utmost enlightenment and wisdom because Vishnu is said to reside in the Bindu or a specific spot located in the center of the eyebrows—refer verse no. 34 above). And this state of existence is free of all faults, imperfections, shortcomings and blemishes associated with worldly existence (43).

44. Then one should meditate upon Lord Narayan who sits atop a divine lotus in the glorious realm of the moon, called the Chandra Mandal. From there the Lord showers his benevolence in the form of Amrit or the elixir of bliss and eternity (in the form of the moonlight) (44).

[Note—The moon's light is very soothing and has the opposite effect to that of the sun's light which is scorching—refer verse no. 33 above.]

45. The experience of the supreme transcendental Lord (Narayan, Vishnu) is sufficient to break up all the hardened knots of the mind and heart of the ascetic. [That is, he becomes malleable and softened to the core. This implies that he would abandon all his earlier arrogance and stubbornness, and become humble, pious and kind to the core.]

It can eliminate all dilemmas and confusions that mire his spirit. [This is because he has become wise, enlightened and self-realised.]

And it can destroy all the hoarded consequences of his past deeds and overcome their demoting effects that he would have been forced to suffer otherwise, and at the same time it prevents the accumulation of fresh deeds and their consequences. [This is because self-realisation and enlightenment entails that the ascetic must have become wise enough to realise that his true 'self' is the conscious sublime Atma which does not do any deeds, rather it yearns to break free from the fetters created by the gross body, and the only way to do this is to distance itself from whatever the body does. This way the Atma would be free from the deeds and the consequences of these deeds done by the body.] (45).

46. Oh Sureshwar (the chief amongst Gods, i.e. Brahma)! Now I (Shiva) shall describe the various Siddhis¹ (special spiritual powers) to you. These help the aspirant to obtain true comfort, happiness and joy. By having complete control over the sense organs, by remaining absolutely calm and serene under all circumstances and provocations, the spiritual aspirant is able to virtually conquer his Prans (i.e. he is able to exercise full control over all the functions of his own body, including the external and internal ones) (46).

[Note—¹The Siddhis mentioned here have been enumerated below in verse nos. 47-54 of this Canto 5. Refer to Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 56-60, 73-75 in this context.]

47. [Verse nos. 47-57 revolve around the idea that one's rewards in life depend upon the ideals that he holds dear and close to his heart and which he adores and pursues as his goal in life. A man should be careful in selecting the deity to be worshipped because not only different deities give different rewards but they also reflect his ideals and goals of life. These deities are personifications of the different virtues and aspects of the supreme Divinity known as the Supreme Being or Brahm, but each has his limitations and field of influence unlike the principal power known as Brahm from whom they derive their authorities. When one worships a particular deity or God, his entire being is concentrated on the virtues that this deity stands for, and this has a profound psychological impact on the worshipper. These virtues leave an indelible mark on him, and he cannot escape their influence upon him. Refer Canto 3, verse no. 25 also in this context. For instance, a man working in a perfume factory would emanate the sweet aroma even long after he has left the premises and gone home much like a chain smoker whose body smells of tobacco even though he might not have smoked a stick of cigarette for a long time. This smell gets into his blood and corrupts his system.]

When an accomplished practitioner is able to focus his mind during Yoga and become completely engrossed in hearing the Naad (the cosmic sound heard during deep meditation and contemplation, the sound that reverberates through his entire being and vibrates through his nerves and veins), he is said to acquire the mystical powers to hear distant sounds not normally heard by the ears. [That is, he develops the power to hear about things that had occurred in the distant past, are happening in some distant place out of earshot in the present time, and would happen in the future. His brain is so trained because he would not have heard the Naad in the first place if it had not been sufficiently fine-tuned. He develops transcendental powers of perception and deep insight so much so that he can foresee things and happenings in advance, or can have the hindsight long

enough to see them occurring long back in time. It also means he can hear voices of the Spirits in heaven, the words of Gods and the Mantras that remain eternally etched in the cosmic ether in the form of sound waves.]

Similarly, when he has focused his mind and concentrated his attention on the Bindu (the dot size spot on the forehead between the two eyebrows where the source of wisdom and enlightenment is said to be located), he is able to have a deep insight into everything. [That is, he develops a high degree of practical wisdom and intelligence that pertains to this material world along with the mystical powers and astounding ability to have an insight into the paranormal. These help him to acquire a sight that is beyond the normal sight of the eye, and have a transcendental, super-human power of vision.] (47).

48. When the Mana (mind) is submerged in the thoughts of the Kalatma (i.e. when he has developed the enlightened view-point that the same pure conscious Atma transcends all the three periods of time such as the past, the present and the future), a wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant is able to become 'Trikalagya'—i.e. he knows and sees everything in the three phases of time, the past, the present and the future. [That is, he transcends the borders of time and place, and becomes omniscient and all-knowing.]

Besides this, he acquires the astounding mystical ability of being able to enter the body and mind of others. [That is, he can know what others think by being able to read their minds, he can influence their temperament, thoughts and behaviours by controlling their mind along with controlling all their actions and deeds by controlling both their mind as well as their bodies. In other words, he can do things through the medium of the other person; whatever the other person does is actually being done by this specially empowered Yogi.] (48).

49. When his mind meditates about and experiences the presence of Amrit (the elixir of eternity and bliss) in the head, i.e. when the enlightened ascetic is able to experience the presence of the supreme transcendental source of eternal bliss and peace known as Brahm in the region of the Vyom Chakra and the Brahm Randhra Chakra by focusing the attention of his mind and the energy of his vital winds called Pran there, he is able to vanquish thirst and hunger (for worldly things, sensual pleasures and material comforts) along with overcoming the bad effects of all (spiritual) poisons¹. [That is, by becoming Brahm-realised and experiencing its attendant spiritual ecstasy and bliss, the ascetic has nothing more to desire and wants nothing in this material world. The enjoyments and comforts of this material world are transient, artificial and inconsequential as compared to this spiritual high of ecstasy and bliss experienced by Brahm-realisation. He is deemed to have overcome all spiritual hurdles by way of overcoming the numerous faults and imperfections that create uncountable obstacles in his spiritual progress and reaching of the ultimate goal of emancipation and salvation.]

When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the earth element² and contemplating about it, he acquires the mystical powers that allow him to take his mind to any corner of the earth, even in beyond it to the nether world called Patal. [That is, this mystical power empowers him to transcend all physical and geographical barriers that usually impede the reach of an ordinary man, and his mind can go anywhere without any hindrance. He can think of everything that exists on this earth, and his mind can even visualise what is hidden inside the bowls of the earth and beyond it. While living on one

part of the earth, he can know what is happening on its other side. This also would imply that nothing in this world would ever influence his mind and captivate it by trapping it in its charm and preventing it from breaking free from its shackles and proceeding ahead.] (49).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 57-60, 62-64.

²Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 85-87.]

50. When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the water element¹ and contemplating about it, he has nothing to fear from this element. [That is, he need not fear from any harm being caused to him from water in any form, such as drowning in it or suffering from any water borne disease or some internal medical problems arising out of water such as oedema of lungs, dropsy of tissues and other diseases due to misbalance in the water content of the body.]

Similarly, when his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the fire element² and contemplating about it, he has nothing to fear from this element. [That is, he cannot be burnt by fire; his body never has to suffer from lack of vital heat and energy; he never suffers from fever and other diseases due to misbalance in the fire element in Nature. Besides this, his speech acquires all the potent of this element because fire is said to be an integral part of the faculty of speech. He has proper eyesight because again the fire and its light are responsible for the faculty of sight to function properly. He has not to suffer from lack of hunger or digestive problems because the fire is responsible for the proper functioning of both.] (50).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 88-90 ½ .

²Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos.90-94.]

51. When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the air or wind element¹ and contemplating about it, he is deemed to have acquired the ability to move in the sky like birds. [That is, he becomes so light that he can float in the air.]

By fixing his mind in the exalted sky element², which is a metaphoric way of saying that by becoming as exalted and sublime as the supreme Brahm himself who has an exalted abode as high as the sky, such a realised and acclaimed ascetic can acquire such mystical and eclectic powers as Anima etc.³ (51).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 95-97.

²Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 98-102.

³Anima is one of the eight mystical powers that are collectively called Siddhis. They have been listed as a note to verse no. 44 of Canto 1 of this Upanishad.]

52. When a realised and enlightened ascetic's mind is engrossed and submerged in meditating upon the Viraat (i.e. the Viraat Purush) and contemplating about his stupendous divinity (i.e. when he is submerged in the thoughts of the Supreme Being in his vast, attributeless and invisible but all-pervading, all-encompassing and all-incorporating macrocosmic form as the Viraat Purush from whom the rest of the creation has come into being), the ascetic is able to acquire such great glories and divine virtues called 'Mahima' as the ones possessed by the Viraat himself¹.

Similarly, when his mind is engrossed and submerged in meditating upon the four-headed Brahma (i.e. the creator of the visible creation as well as the four Vedas) and

contemplating about his great glories, he acquires the mystical powers to create the world if he so wishes² (52).

[Note--¹That is, he now transcends all the limitations of the physical world and even the paranormal world of the Spirits to reach the supreme exalted stature where he acquires such mystical powers as those possessed by Brahm when the latter revealed himself as the Viraat Purush. This Viraat Purush is much senior and more powerful than even the individual gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder of creation, for the simple reason that all of them have been created by this Viraat to carry out specific jobs on his behalf. The powers of these three Gods are tailor-made to enable them to carry out their respective functions, but the Viraat has all the powers of these three Gods vested in him, because the Viraat is the supreme Authority who delegates these powers to these Gods in the first place, and anyone who does not possess any power cannot delegate it to someone else. According to the Vedantic view of creation, the Viraat is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm in the subtlest and the most sublime form. Brahm first metamorphosed itself into the Hiranyagarbha, the subtle body of creation, and the latter evolved into the Viraat. The entire creation has come into being from the body of this Viraat. So the latter incorporates the entire creation in its form. In other words, the Viraat is the sum total of all the gross bodies of all the individual creatures in creation. By extension, the ascetic who has acquired the stature which makes him one like the Viraat becomes very near to Brahm and acquires the enviable exalted stature of being superior to even the Gods because this Viraat is superior to all the Gods put together. This fact is indirectly asserted in Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 105, 107-111.

²That is why Puranic lore has numerous tales of great sages who had the power to revive even the dead and create entire worlds if they so wished. An example is sage Vishwamitra who created a heaven for his patron king Trishanku. And another instance is that of sage Bharadwaj who created an entire mini city complete with all royal comforts to entertain and test the sincerity of Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, while he was on his way to bring back his older brother from exile in the forest. This episode appears in the epic Ramayana in its 2nd Canto called 'Ayodhya Kand'.]

53. When the ascetic fixes the attention of his Atma (his conscious self) on Indra, the king of Gods and a metaphor for sense gratification and indulgence in worldly material comforts and pleasures derived from the sense objects in this world, he obtains the greatest material comforts and pleasures that the world of sense objects can ever hope to provide anyone¹.

Similarly, if he fixes the attention of his Atma on Vishnu, the sustainer, care taker and protector of the world, he would acquire mystical powers to sustain, take care and protect the world. [That is, with this mystical power he can well look after his dependants and his subjects. He becomes a kingly figure because this is the basic function of any good king—to sustain, protect and look after the general welfare of his subjects.] (53).

[Note--¹This is because *Indra* is a metaphor for all things sensual and the natural tendency of the mind to remain engrossed in enjoying the material comforts and pleasures of the world with the sense organs. The word 'Indra' is derived from the word 'Indris' meaning the sense organs of the body. These sense organs have an inherent and natural inclination to be attracted towards the world and its material objects, and then derive comfort and pleasure from them. They would naturally swerve towards them and find a natural habitat in them. It is a Herculean task to pull them away from their natural habitat just like it is almost impossible to pull a man out of his own house and forcing him to disown it. So, if the ascetic remains engrossed in thinking about the material

comforts of the world, he would strive whole-heartedly get them. This verse has a double meaning—on the one hand it is a sarcastic comment on those stupid ascetics who suffer great difficulties in first acquiring mystical powers and then frittering them away by using them to pursue and obtain such low-value and despicable objects as the material comforts of the world and personal glorification in spite of knowing that they are transient and perishable and would be demeaning for their soul, and on the other hand warning those who are newcomers in the spiritual field and are yet unaware of how to use the mystical powers once they are accessed by being successful in Yoga. The fruits of Yoga are emancipation and salvation for the soul, and not indulgences in the world and being captive of the sense organs need for constant and infinite gratification.]

54. When the ascetic thinks of Rudra (the angry form of Lord Shiva) while meditating and fixes his mind and attention on his virtues (which are fiery in nature and consume the world in the fire of anger), he is able to acquire such great fiery powers that would enable him to annihilate the world if he so wishes just like Lord Rudra himself.

Likewise, if he meditates upon Lord Narayan (Vishnu), he becomes one like him and acquires mystical powers possessed by the Lord. And if he meditates upon Lord Vasudeo (another name of Vishnu who is regarded as the Lord of the eight Vasus¹, the important entities created by the creator for the welfare of the creation when it came into existence in the beginning, such as material wealth without which life in this world would be difficult to sustain), he is able to acquire all the eight Siddhis² (i.e. he is able to acquire lordship over all these eight Vasus, and therefore over all the vital components of creation that help to sustain the creatures in this material world).

[In other words, an ascetic would acquire the virtues of the entity upon which he meditates. If his idol of adoration is something as horrible as anger, if his mind is always restless and agitated, if he is always full of jealousy and ill will towards others, if he is always thinking of violence, cruelty and spite, then he would acquire these lowly virtues because one becomes what one constantly thinks about. This is indicated by the word 'Rudra'. On the contrary, if he thinks and contemplates about nobler things and higher virtues of life such as the emancipation and salvation of the spirit, he would acquire those eclectic virtues as the ones personified by Lord Narayan. And if he is more concerned with the care, upkeep and general welfare of his dependants and subjects, he would be always thinking in the term of providing enough for their comfort and wellbeing so that they do not have to face dearth of any material necessities of life, and this is metaphorically depicted by saying that he would acquire the virtues of Vasudeo or would become as exalted and empowered as Vasudeo.] (54).

[Note—¹These *Vasus* are the various patron Gods who preside over the essentials of life; they are eight in number—Vishnu is the sustainer, Shiva who is the annihilator, Kuber who is the treasurer of the wealth of the Gods, the Sun, Water, Fire, Wealth represented by gems and gold, and 'Ray' representing glory and fame. The element 'Fire' is the most potent, prominent and essential force in creation, because without fire the world would freeze to death. Hence, the Fire-God is said to be the chief amongst the Vasus. The 'fire' element is the active force in creation and is primarily responsible for kindling the cosmic cauldron that set in motion the process, and once having set it in motion it then sustained it and would finally annihilate it by burning it to cinders. On the other hand, Lord Vishnu is the passive force of creation represented by his other form of Viraat Purush which is the primary male aspect of creation. Lord Vishnu, who is the sustainer of the creation, is the Lord of Laxmi who is the Goddess of wealth, and is the supreme creator because

Brahma, the old patriarch of creation who created the visible world and its creatures, was himself born atop the divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu utilizes the services of Laxmi who is the personification of the active forces of creation to create, sustain and annihilate the world. The Vasus are symbolic Gods who represent those essential aspects of creation without which life would be difficult to conceive and sustain and finally conclude.

The eight Vasus are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are— (i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun God (who provides energy and food) and his rays and radiance (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), (iii) Shiva (the concluder or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water God (called Varun), (vi) the Fire God (called Agni), (vii) any body of water such as a pond, a river etc., and (viii) holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation). According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/3, the Vasus are the following—Fire, Earth, Air, Antariksha (the space of the solar system), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heavens), the Moon, and the Nakshatras (the stars and the planets).

According to Purans, the eight Vasus are the following-- Dhruv (ध्रुव), Dhar (धर), Som (सोम—the sap of an elixir-providing plant called Som which is used during religious ceremonies as sanctified liquid offered to the Gods), Aapah (आप—water), Anil (अनिल—wind), Anal (अनल—fire), Pratush (प्रत्यूष) and Prabhas (प्रभास).

These eight Vasus are the semi-Gods who symbolise the various types of assets needed to sustain this world. They therefore represent such assets as jewels, precious stones and gems, gold and other forms of wealth and property. Vasus also refers to the fire and water elements as well as their grosser forms as the terrestrial fire and water bodies such as ponds and lakes; to the virtue of radiance, splendour and glory; to the ray of light; to Kuber (the treasurer of Gods), Shiva, Sun, Vishnu, and a simple and pious gentleman.

Lord Vishnu has one of his names as *Vasudeo* because he is the sustainer and protector of creation, signifying his undisputed lordship over all the essential elements in Nature, called the Vasus of which there are eight in number, created at the beginning of creation to help sustain the upcoming creation.

²The various Siddhis are enumerated in note of verse no. 44 of Canto 1, and in verse nos. 47-54 of the present Canto 5.]

55. An ascetic who is not only well-versed with the real meaning and intent of the various tenets of Yoga in their literal sense but is also an expert exponent of them in practice, being a personification of Yoga itself, who is self restraint and practices the various principles of Yoga in their entirety, is able to achieve fulfillment of all his wishes. Success in any endeavour depends upon one's sincerity of purpose, commitment and diligence, and this applies to Yoga as well (55).

56. The Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide who helps the spiritual aspirant to achieve his spiritual goal by showing him the correct path best suited for him and lending him a helping hand all the way through till the goal is achieved) is like Lords Brahma, Vishnu and Sada Shiva personified for the ascetic (and therefore is to be honoured and shown the same reverence). There is no one more exalted and important in the three worlds than one's Guru (56).

57. When the disciple worships and reveres his Guru, who is selfless and unconcerned with any material gains and who has the necessary erudition himself so that he can show light to others, as the one who gives him the divine gift of eclectic knowledge and who lights up the spiritual path for him, when he has devotion for such a Guru and treats him with the same reverence that he shows for the Parmeshwar (the supreme Lord God), he is blessed by the Guru who rewards him with the fruit of knowledge and wisdom. As a result, the disciple acquires the eclectic knowledge that the Guru possesses in a comprehensive and holistic way. [The Guru would be pleased by his devotion and sincerity and would not hide anything from him like a father who would not conceal anything from the son who serves him with great devotion and love. The Guru might even tell him certain secrets that he may not tell his other disciples out of love and affection for this particularly devoted and committed disciple. The result being that this sincere disciple gets his special attention which translates into his chances of learning the great secrets that largely remain unknown to his fellow students.] (57).

58. There is no difference between the Guru and the supreme Lord (Shiva); both are alike. In other words, while the Guru is as exalted and worthy of the same honour and reverence as one shows to the supreme Lord, the Lord himself is to be honoured like an exalted and honourable Guru because he shows the devotee the correct and proper path for his spiritual well being.

One should therefore honour, worship and serve one's Guru with full commitment, devotion and sincerity (58).

59. One should never treat the Guru at par with one's own self¹. On the contrary, one should certainly treat the Guru at par with the Supreme Being (59).

[Note—¹This is a very important observation especially in the context of the teaching of Upanishads that the same Atma lives in all living beings. The reason is that though this is a fact, the other truth that the knowledge of the Guru is far superior to what one knows oneself is also equally important and should be kept in mind. The teachings of the scriptures are universal but they have to be understood in the proper context and correctly interpreted. For example, if the Atma is the same in all living beings, then would any man in his senses go and embrace a lion? The idea behind the universality of the Atma or soul is not as preposterous and ridiculous as embracing a lion because the animal also has an Atma—for if one pretends to be so enlightened as to treat a lion as one's dear and argue that one ought to go and embrace it to establish the truth of the tenets of the Upanishad that the same Atma lives in all the creatures, then why does he not think twice before killing innocent animals for fire sacrifices or to satisfy his hunger for meat, why does he treat someone as his friend and the other as his enemy, why is there so much strife and blood-letting in this world?

The idea of the universality and uniformity of the Atma, its quintessential and ubiquitous nature, is more subtle and sublime. The idea is to remove so much dichotomy, schism, discord and disharmony between men and communities in this world where strife and warfare, where blood spilling and hatred, where animosity, jealousy and ill-will are so rampant. Say, why should one treat one man as his brother while the other as his arch enemy if the Atma is the same in both? Instead of this, there ought to be universal brotherhood, compassion, love and grace all around.

The Guru has certain knowledge that the disciple does not have. And therefore he must be shown great respect for this simple reason that he is superior in knowledge than

one's own self. Since knowledge is the greatest asset that one can ever hope to possess, the Guru is richer than one's own self, for money and other worldly riches can perish and be stolen by thieves but knowledge is an eternal and imperishable asset that would come in handy wherever one goes and would entitle him to respect and honour even in unknown countries. In fact it is this knowledge and wisdom that makes the Guru so revered and honourable. It is this knowledge and wisdom of the Guru that is worshipped and not his physical body or his Atma for the simple reason that the body is loathsome, perishable and gross, and the Atma is the same in all the creatures, including the disciple. But the degree of knowledge, erudition, wisdom and skills that the Guru possesses are unique to him and much superior to others.]

60. A person who has acquired the knowledge of this Yogshikha Upanishad is indeed very wise and enlightened. He has deemed to have acquired the best of knowledge worthy of acquisition in all the three worlds (i.e. in the terrestrial world, the nether world and the celestial world of heavens) (60).

61. An acclaimed Yogi (i.e. a self-realised, wise and practicing ascetic) remains immune to the good or bad effects of deeds and actions; he is not concerned with either the auspicious consequences or the inauspicious ones of what is happening around him.

He becomes free from the fear of being affected by such negative notions as sorrows and grief, of being rendered handicapped by physical or spiritual ailments and shortcomings, of being defeated and subdued by others, and of getting trapped in the endless cycle of taking a birth in this world and then dying (61).

62. But a true ascetic should not allow his mind to remain trapped in the enticing charms proffered by the various Siddhis which are the various mystical powers that come automatically as one progresses in Yoga and are a part of the whole exercise of Yoga but are not its aim and final spiritual objective¹.

The Mana (the thinking mind and the emotional heart combine) is naturally restless and inclined towards the material world and its sense objects which have a natural affinity for the sense organs of the body because they gratify the latter's desire for pleasure and comfort. Therefore, the ascetic should not rely upon and expect that the Mana which is uncontrolled would ever help him in acquiring spiritual powers called the Siddhis².

But at the same time this Mana is a powerful tool in the hands of the ascetic if he is able to control it and focus its attention to nobler objectives such as to obtain access to the knowledge of the supreme transcendental Brahman and the eclectic essence of Divinity. This would pave the way for his Mukti—i.e. it would liberate him from the cycle of birth and death by enlightening him about his true 'self' which is pure consciousness and distinct from the body and the world in which he lives. This would deliver him from all worldly miseries and torments from which he had been suffering from time immemorial.

Besides this, enlightenment about the supreme power of the almighty and eternal Atma gives freedom from being bonded to inferiority complexes in this mortal world. This is tantamount to Mukti for the ascetic. There is no doubt about it (62).

[Note—¹The Yogtattva Upanishad is very explicit on this subject. In its verse nos. 21-22 and 76-79 it clearly prohibits the ascetic to avoid getting deluded by the charms of the mystical powers that come with success in Yoga and showing off his prowess because they might give him worldly glory but would be demoting for him vis-à-vis his spiritual

progress. These Siddhis are like a double-edged knife—they can be a potent and powerful instrument for breaking free from the fetters that shackle the ascetic to this body and the world, thereby paving the way for his liberation and deliverance, or they can be like a knife that chops off the wings of a bird and grounding it for eternity if he allows them to sweep him off his feat by the worldly glory and fame and their attendant material benefits that these Siddhis bring in their wake.

These Siddhis are the special ability that the ascetic acquires due to Yoga, such as the ability to become small and huge, to go wherever he wants, to fly in the air, to hold his breath for prolonged times and remain alive even when buried underground, and so on and so forth. But all such skills would naturally give him worldly fame as people are naturally attracted by those who have super-human or super-natural powers. The reason is that all men are suffering from one cause or another and seek some ready-made divine intervention that would help them overcome their worldly miseries. This is one prime reason why they flock to pilgrim sites—to seek divine intercession of Gods to alleviate their sufferings. Rare are those who go to holy sites seeking Mukti or Moksha, meaning liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death, and salvation and emancipation of the soul respectively. Likewise rare are such people who read the scriptures for the purpose of acquiring true knowledge, for the majority do so for acquiring fame and wealth as renowned scholars who are much in demand and go around lecturing others while they themselves are neck-deep in the swamp from which they teach others to escape.

Similarly, Yoga is not to be used for worldly gains of acquiring fame and a big fellowship of disciples by being able to perform some magical feats based on the various Siddhis that come naturally with success in Yoga. It would be misuse of Yoga and a highly condemnable, deplorable, demeaning and despicable act much like one selling one's mother for some pecuniary gains, for Yoga is no less than a mother for the ascetic because it nourishes his soul and leads him by the hand towards his Moksha (spiritual liberation and deliverance) much like a mother who would always think for the betterment and a noble future for her child. Yoga is the ultimate potent and effective medicine for all spiritual ailments like surgery in is medical science which ought to be used with prudence and wisdom as in the case of emergencies and life-threatening cases such as to remove a malignant cancerous tumour from the body or amputating a gangrenous limb, but surely not for artificial beautification of the gross body as is done in modern times when one undertakes cosmetic surgery to beautify the body which is however perishable and certain to decay during old age and die one day.

²This is because if the Mana is left to its own devices, it would pull the ascetic towards this world instead of pulling him away from it. The use of the word 'Siddhi' here is in the context of success in spiritual progress towards obtaining Mukti, or liberation and deliverance for the soul from the cycle of birth and death, as has been made clear below. The real aim of Yoga is to establish a union between the individual creature and the supreme Lord, to harness all the scattered energy points in his own body and utilise their joint efforts not only for the spiritual upliftment of the practitioner but also to bring about an overall betterment of his physical health and life. This would give him a chance to lead a peaceful, healthy, constructive, productive and happy life as compared to a life which is led as a burden on the soul as well as the society. Contentment and satisfaction along with enhancement of energy and strength, not only at the physical plane of the body but also at the spiritual plane as well, are some of the natural benefits of Yoga. A life of contentment, happiness, peace and bliss is like obtaining liberation from the fetters of miseries and grief that seems to submerge everyone except a few realised souls in this world.]

Thus ends Canto 5

Canto 6

1. Brahma requested Shiva once again—‘Oh Lord! Please enlighten me on the concept of Upaasana¹, for the knowledge of this eclectic path of spiritualism provides one with Mukti (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) from the entrapping world of delusions and artificiality’ (1).

[Note--¹*Upaasana* and its Obstacles—(a) The word *Upaasana* covers the entire gamut of virtues that form the foundation of the process of worship of the Lord by the devotee. Upaasana therefore is defined as worship, adoration and paying homage to one’s revered deity; to be devoted and fully committed to any ideal, especially in the field of spiritualism so much that the ideal is personified as a deity. It includes, inter alia, devotion, supplication, dedication, adoration, meditation upon the chosen deity, Yoga, recitation of holy Mantras, religious rituals, remembrance of the Lord, service to him as well as his devotees, selfless sacrifices, unadulterated love and sincere affection for the Lord et al—all these are the various forms of Upaasana of the Lord.

Besides this, philosophically speaking, the worship or adoration of the ‘Truth’ is also called Upaasana. This worship can be of a chosen deity or of the pure self. This worship embraces both meditation and contemplation because the worshipper physically and consciously focuses his attention unwaveringly on his object of worship, hence it is meditation, and thinks deeply about the ways to attain his object of worship, hence contemplation. The evolution of human psychology from the humdrum and mundane to higher plane of thought and discrimination is the aim of spirituality and the reward is divinity and self realisation. Therefore, spirituality is centered and established around the theme of Atma/soul which is the pure conscious Spirit residing in the creature.

Thus we see that the discriminating intellect has a major role to play in contemplation because it helps to guide the mind to wade through a sea of knowledge, select what it needs and separate the essence from the clutter, to discriminate between what is ‘the real truth’ and what is only ‘the apparent truth’. It eggs the mind on to reach the final conclusion. Thus, whereas meditation is an important tool for a contemplative life, the latter is more intuition based; it relies heavily on the laboratory of the intellect more than the mind to achieve its purpose.

(b) Obstacles—There are certain postulations for success in doing Upaasana and they can be better understood if we know the things that created an obstacle in its success because then the practitioner would strive to avoid them and be on the guard from falling prey to them. So, let us have a brief glance at the obstacles in Upaasana. There are four chief types— (i) physiological obstacles such as hunger, thirst, sleep etc. They can be controlled by practice and self-restraint. (ii) The inherent tendency of the mind and the body to go towards pleasing objects and to resist control. This is called the Vasanas and Vrittis of the creature. Perseverance and persistence is needed here. Gentle prodding and cajoling of the mind and disciplining of the body are needed also. (iii) Our own mistakes such as carelessness, disorganised life, overdoing or indulgences in routine matters. The best way to overcome these is moderation. A gradual disciplining is needed here. (iv) Uncertainty and lack of proper guidance. Here the scriptures help.

The obstacles have been described by Patanjali in his ‘Yog Sutra’ as follows—(i) disease, mental laziness and lethargy, doubt, delusions and erroneous perceptions, lack of enthusiasm, attraction and attachment towards gratification of sense organs and their

worldly objects, dithering and falling when the goal is almost at hand, grief, distresses of the body, irregular breathing and non-retention of concentration (Patanjali Yog Sutra, 2/31).

The four obstacles described by Acharya Gaupada in his celebrated Vedanta treatise called 'Mandukya Karika' are the following—(i) Laya (state of mental dullness, lack of concentration and even sleep). (ii) Vikshepa (restlessness of mind, agitations, doubts, confusions, uncertainties, perplexities, fickleness, restlessness and other negative traits that dog a creature and snatches away his peace of mind and demeanours). (iii) Kashaaya (entering of the mind into a stupefied state). (iv) Rasavada (the joy of meditation). The 1st obstacle 'Laya' can be removed by keeping the mind active and agile by proper and regulated life. The 2nd obstacle 'Vikshepa' can be dealt with by forcibly driving away the agitation-causing thoughts from the mind. The 3rd obstacle 'Kashaaya' is caused by intense attachment to the materialistic world and its objects. The remedy here is to draw the mind away from the world and consciously cultivate noble thoughts. The 4th obstacle 'Rasavada' is a temporary feeling of joy by the seeker. He must stick to his path and not let this temporary joy to overcome his aim of permanence in joy.

According to Yoga doctrines, there are five hindrances—(i) Avidya (ignorance), (ii) Asmita (ego, pride and haughtiness), (iii) Raaga (attachment, infatuation), (iv) Dwesha (aversion, malice, ill-will, jealously envy) and (v) Abhinivesha (clinging to life).]

2. Lord Shiva replied—'I shall narrate to you the elementary principles of the concept of Upaasana as expounded and enunciated in the Vedas. Learn about them in a holistic manner, and then you must conform to their essential tenets while you do Upaasana in order to be comprehensively successful in your spiritual endeavours (2).

3. First I bow and pay my respects to the glorious 'Maha Shakti', the great divine cosmic and spiritual powers possessed by the Consciousness and revealed in the stupendous powers and authority as depicted by the Mana (the mind which is the controller of all the activities of the body along with the perception of the world), the astounding potentials of the Sushumna Naadi (the chief duct through which the vital winds are diverted during meditation in order to make the ascetic experience the eclectic and dynamic presence of Brahm inside his own self, the duct where the Naad is heard, and the Naadi which acts as a pathway to Brahm-realisation), the Kundalini (the subtle coiled energy center located at the base of the spine which is activated during meditation, thereby releasing its energy which helps the vital winds to gain sufficient momentum, power and force to rise up the Sushumna Naadi and reach the top of the head from where they can make exit from the body and provide liberation to the ascetic from the bondage of the body), and the Amrit (the ambrosia of eternal beatitude and felicity) symbolically stored in the Moon¹ which the ascetic drinks when he has become successful in his Upaasana (worship). [This refers to the sense of extreme ecstasy and bliss experienced when Yoga is successful.] (3).

[Note--¹The *moon* is said to be the celestial pitcher of Amrit, the elixir of eternity and bliss that is drunk by the Gods. In the human body, it is represented by the Eda Naadi passing through the left nostrils and which is used during Pranayam. (Refer Canto 1, verse 166.) It is also present as the crescent moon, the Ardha Chandrakar Chakra, which is said to be the shape of the water element of which the patron deity is Vishnu, the sustainer of creation, and located from the knee to the hip region. (Refer Canto 1, verse 176 and Canto 5, verse no. 13.).

In the context of Yoga, the moon is compared to the Bindu, literally the 'drop' signifying the sense of extreme bliss obtained at the culmination of Yoga much like the immense sense of contentedness felt at the culmination of the intercourse. This analogy is apt because the Moon God is also said to be the patron God of passions and love as is proved by the commonly observed fact that one becomes sentimental and emotional under moonlight as compared to the sunlight. In the context of the present Upanishad, the Bindu would be the point-source from where the ascetic hears the Naad reverberating in his inner self and providing him with an extreme sense of bliss by massaging his nerves.

4. [The concept of Naadi as the nerves that carry impulses of life and consciousness in the body have been elaborately described in Canto 5, verse nos. 17-27 of this Upanishad.]

There are one hundred one Naadis¹ in the region of the heart and radiate from here to various parts of the body. Amongst them, one goes up to the head. Since this Naadi is facing upwards, it helps one to obtain Amrit, the elixir of bliss and eternal life that automatically comes with attainment of wisdom and enlightenment as symbolised by the upwardly facing Naadi².

The rest of the Naadis spread out to the rest of the body (4).

[Note—¹The heart has basically two types of ducts—arteries and veins, the former taking blood away from the heart and the latter bringing blood from other parts of the body to the heart. Though the term 'Naadi' usually refers to the nerves, it can also mean these ducts that carry blood because the latter is also a metaphor for life and consciousness that pulsates in the body of a man. The nerves however keep the heart alive and beating by their electrical impulses; it is the nerve that makes one feel the pain in the heart during its seizure or when it is under severe strain. Thus, broadly speaking, the Naadis in relation to the heart would be the arteries and veins as well as the nerves that keep the heart beating and charged with its electric power to beat continuously, but in the present context of Yoga, the word Naadi would be the nerves that are clustered around the heart and radiate out in various directions giving the impression that they are originating from the heart.

²The mind and intellect is located in the head, while the Atma which is the pure consciousness of the creature is said to have its abode in the subtle space of the heart. So by saying that when this Naadi looks upwards one obtains access to Amrit, the eternal ambrosia of bliss and happiness, it is meant that one is able to finally taste the nectar of Brahm-realisation which drips from the honeycomb-like mind and intellect located high up in the head by setting a noble target of reaching for something as high and exalted as the acquisition of truthful eclectic knowledge about Brahm who himself has his symbolic abode in the top of the head in the mind-intellect complex, by meditating and contemplating deeply upon this divine and eclectic entity (Brahm). The heart is dominated by emotions and sentiments; it is more impulse-driven than being rational and thoughtful in its approach to things. On the contrary, the mind-intellect is an intelligent and sober aide which is able to guide the man towards his real goal in life and correct path to be followed to reach it. This fact is metaphorically indicated in this verse by the Naadi which has its origin in the heart but looks up instead of down, for the latter would indicate that the man is more inclined to be attracted towards the lowly charms of this materialistic world and enjoy the pleasures and comforts proffered by them than to look upward and strive for higher goals of life such as acquisition of truthful knowledge of the reality marked by high degree of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment as well as the need for exemplary self-control over the body and its sense organs.]

5. [It would be noted that the major part of this Canto is dedicated to the spiritual significance and importance of the main Naadi called Sushumna which is also known as the Brahm Naadi, the Virjaa Naadi, and the Brahm Rupini.]

Out of the one hundred one Naadis, the best one is said to be Sushumna. This Naadi has a special quality that it can lead to Brahm-realisation and self-realisation; hence it is called by the name of Virjaa Naadi¹. Since it leads one to submerge ones self in the bliss and ecstasy of Brahm-realisation, it is symbolically called 'Brahm-Rupini'—the one who has the form and face of Brahm (5).

[Note—¹The word *Virjaa* literally means the one which is unpolluted and pure, an epithet for the exalted Lord Vishnu, the eternal sustainer, nourisher and protector of creation and the form of Brahm also known as Viraat Purush who is eternally free from all worldly taints, impurities and blemishes. This Naadi is like a holy river that has a unpolluted origin in some high mountain and miraculously remains free from pollution inspite of all the pollutants being poured into its waters as it meanders its way down the plains before merging and losing its identity in the ocean which is ultimately the source of all water on this earth. The one example which can be aptly cited here is the holy river Ganges that originates in the lofty and pollution-free Himalayan mountains, flows through the land and then merges into the ocean in the Bay of Bengal, remaining pure and holy and a provider of Moksha, or spiritual salvation to those who take a bath in its holy waters inspite of the fact that all sorts of city and factory pollutants are being constantly poured into its waters during its long and meandering journey through the broad plains of India. The water of this river is so mystically pure and considered holy that it can be preserved for long periods of time without it getting ruined or becoming unpalatable.

In the present case, the Sushumna Naadi is the duct through which the vital winds called Pran are made to travel up during meditation by expert ascetics which gives them the thrill and ecstasy of self and Brahm realisation, and it is also the path taken by the Pran when the ascetic finally decides to shed his mortal coil and obtain his Moksha or final liberation and deliverance. This Naadi leads straight to the top of the head where the ascetic experiences the bliss and ecstasy of Brahm-realisation. When the Pran finally decides to make its exit, it does so through the Brahm Randhra at the top of the head. Since the flow of Pran through this Sushumna Naadi leads to one's spiritual salvation and emancipation it is called the most exalted of the numerous Naadis and the one that leads the spiritual aspirant directly to Brahm-realisation.]

6. The Ida Naadi goes along its left and the Pingla Naadi is to the right. They kind of escort the Sushumna Naadi by moving along its flanks. The one at the center, i.e. the one who is being escorted is obviously senior to the one who escorts. That is why this Sushumna is considered senior to these two other Naadis (6).

7. Practice should be made to control the movement of the Pran Vayu in the region of the navel where it flows continuously. [That is, one should practice to control the flow of breath by restricting the regular movement of the muscles in the abdomen around the navel. These muscles contract and expand incessantly and in a rhythmic manner to enable the body to inhale and exhale breath by their regular pumping action. When their movement is controlled voluntarily by Yoga exercises, the Pran Vayu is deemed to be controlled because its flow inside the body can be proportionately controlled.] (7).

8. Arising from the rear of the anus is the vertebral column called the 'Veena Danda' (because it literally resembles the long arm of the Indian lute). It supports the body and

bears its weight. The Brahm Naadi¹, i.e. the Sushumna Naadi, passes through this bone structure (8).

[Note—¹The Sushumna Naadi is called *Brahm Naadi* for the simple and logical reason that it is responsible for all consciousness or the dynamic living forces of Brahm pulsating inside the creature's body to move through it, as well as the fact that it is conducive to one attaining the exalted state of Brahm-realisation. Each single stimulus originating from the remotest corner of the body travel through the network of nerves and ganglions to the brain through this grand highway of the spinal cord, and all instructions of the brain are passed on to all parts of the body back through this channel. If the spinal cord is damaged or cut at any place, the body is paralysed. Since 'consciousness and life' are synonyms of Brahm, this duct is called 'Brahm Naadi'. According to human anatomy, the spinal cord gives rise to a cluster of 31 pairs of nerves called the 'spinal nerves' which branch out to all parts of the body. The Sushumna Naadi refers to the main nerve in this cluster, and it is the central core of the spinal cord around which all other nerves are grouped. It connects the brain to all parts of the body. The vertebral column protects these Naadis which collectively form the 'central nervous system'.

Yoga Upanishads are focused on different means of activating this Sushumna Naadi and describe in detail how the various Prans or life factors are controlled and diverted by an expert ascetic to enable him to achieve success in this endeavour. This single Naadi is regarded as the most important amongst hundred of such nerves and veins in the body as it is the one which leads straight up to the brain from the base of the body. It is the grand highway through which all senses and impulses flow in the body, and it is the single most important nerve the malfunction of which can disrupt life of any individual. If any other nerve or vein malfunctions, the damage would be localized, but the malfunctioning of the Sushumna Naadi can derail the entire train.

Since the Sushumna Naadi is responsible for helping one to obtain the spiritually exalted state of self-realisation as preached by Yoga, which is another way of saying that the person has understood his true nature and form as the pure conscious Atma which in turn is nothing but a microcosmic form of the supreme cosmic Consciousness called Brahm, it is said that it is the only avenue leading to Brahm, or the Naadi on which one can travel to find the abode of Brahm, just like we say that a certain Mr. A resides on a particular road and his house can be reached only by traveling up or down it, and not by traveling on any other road. All other roads can help him reach that particular road, and there may be umpteen numbers of such avenues, but the ultimate destination where Mr. A is to be found is on this specific road where his dwelling is located. We often find that roads are named after some great personality living along it or who is closely associated with the neighbourhood. In this case this 'great personality' is Brahm, and hence the Naadi which leads one to this exalted Being is named after him as the 'Brahm Naadi'.

Usually an emperor or king lives at the end of a road which is named after him, and equally usually an emperor's palace is built on a high artificially elevated ground or a ground that is naturally high such as large mound, hill-top or hillock—which is like a high citadel or a capitol hill because it is the seat of power and authority. In the present case, this high ground is the 'head' of the creature's body and it is here that the Brahm lives. This region of the body governs the rest of it, and it is here that the mind and intellect with their stupendous abilities and astonishing controlling authority and powers is located. Hence, it is the seat of Brahm; it is the site of all wisdom, erudition, sagacity, enlightenment, skills and knowledge. All other parts of the body are like the various districts of the vast realm of the empire, and each patron God who controls a particular part of the body is like a junior king who has to depend upon the will, mercy and grace of the emperor to remain in power and exercise his authority under his jurisdiction.

Verse no. 10 describes this Sushumna Naadi as the abode of the Parmeshwar, the supreme Lord who is none but Brahm, also giving credence to the reasoning given above of why this Naadi is called 'Brahm Naadi'.]

9. Passing through the center of the vertebral column, this Brahm Naadi is thin and filament like. Through the hole of this vertebral column passes the Ida and Pingla Naadis, and in their center is the Sushumna Naadi which is radiant like the sun (9).

[Note—Like the celestial sun that shines in the sky surrounded by the moon and other planets and stars, the Sushumna Naadi is surrounded by other Naadis and is central to their existence. All other Naadis owe their life and importance to this central Sushumna Naadi because it connects directly to the brain and therefore is central to all impulses and consciousness that pulsates in the different nerves and other tissues of the body; should this all-important Naadi fail to function, the body would be generally paralyzed and become as good as being dead. Its importance is emphasised by comparing it with the sun because the latter is central to the existence of the entire solar system. In terms of Yoga and metaphysics, the Sushumna Naadi is the one which helps the aspirant to attain the eclectic state of self and Brahm realisation; it is through it that the Pran winds are directed in the upward direction which is a metaphoric way of saying that the Spirit is lifted from a low level of existence to a high level.]

10. This Sushumna Naadi represents the entire living world. It is metaphorically all-pervading and ubiquitous (for the simple reason that it is the channel through which all consciousness flows in the body, and without conscious life flowing through the nerves in the body of the man, the world would be meaningless and burden-like for him; a man living a paralysed life would prefer to die than to live like a vegetable and be a tiresome and irksome burden on his kith and kin).

This fact is symbolically stressed by saying that the supreme transcendental Lord called Parmeshwar, who is surrounded by all the glorious elements of creation such as the brilliant and dazzling sun, the luminous moon and the splendorous fire, is established in this Naadi, or he has his abode in this Naadi (10).

11. It is in this Sushumna Naadi that the entire conscious world consisting of all the living beings, all the directions of the earth, all the oceans, the mountains, the hills and the boulders, the islands, the continents and the rivers, all forms of knowledge encrypted in letters and words formed by them and revealed in the form of the Vedas and other scriptures of all denominations, all the qualities and virtues that are exhibited by conscious life (living creatures), and all that is mortal or immortal in existence are established. [This is because only as long as one has consciousness and life in the body that anything in this world would matter to him. For a dead body which has no consciousness and life flowing in its Sushumna Naadi, nothing matters. Life and consciousness are synonymous with Brahm, and as long as Brahm is present inside the body the latter is able to have any interest in the world. Since the Sushumna Naadi controls the central nervous system linking the brain to all other parts of the body and through it to the outside world, a slightest disturbance in its operations is catastrophic for the creature's existential life; the world would become dark and lifeless for all practical purposes then. A paralyzed man has no interest in the colour of the flower or how jovial or gloomy the world is; his own world has ceased to exist and the rest does not bother him in the least. This fact is metaphorically emphasised once Brahm leaves the body,

nothing would matter for the body or the creature. The word 'Jiva' or a creature itself is indicative of this fact—for it literally means 'one who is alive'. A creature who is not Brahm realised is, for all practical purposes, not a 'true Jiva', i.e. he is as good as dead. Though all other Naadis might work normally in such a Jiva, he is deemed to be 'spiritually dead', and as such he is as good as tree or an animal who are living in the technical meaning of the term but have no scope of spiritual salvation and emancipation.] (11).

12. All the forms of sound and speech, all the Mantras (mystical formulas based on letters and words chanted or hummed as prayer in religious exercises), all the Purans (ancient mythological histories), all the Gunas (the Sata—the auspicious qualities, the Raja—the mediocre qualities, and Tama—the lowly and mean qualities), all the seeds (causes), the Atma (the individual creature's consciousness) and the Pran Vayu (vital winds that keep the creature alive)—verily they are established in this Sushumna Naadi. [As explained in above verses, everything in existence has any real relevance for the creature only as long as there is consciousness flowing through the spinal cord. A dead body would not need either the Vedas or the Atma! They are of any importance and relevance only to a living man, and become inconsequential and redundant if the central nervous system collapses.] (12).

13. In fact, the entire world is centered on the Sushumna Naadi. The inner being and core factors of life revolve around this Naadi. It is the essential factor that keeps a creature alive and conscious. [If this Naadi becomes dysfunctional for any reason, the living being would stop being called a 'living being' for it would be nothing but a walking corpse as it were.] Many other Naadis have their origin in it¹ (13).

[Note--¹That is, all other functional nerves that relate to various activities of the body, right from the basic functions of life which are carried out by the external gross organs of perception of the body such as seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling etc. to those functions that are carried on by the inner organs such as digestion, assimilation, excretion, circulation, reproduction etc. and extending up to the subtlest functions as thinking, understanding, analyzing and deciding on any matter, carry on their respective functions in a coordinated way and help to operate the complex structure of the body because of the proper functioning of this single Sushumna Naadi. Otherwise their functioning or not functioning would be irrelevant for the man who has lost consciousness in his Sushumna Naadi as he would be unconscious of everything and anything around him; he would not be interested in anything whatsoever. For example, a paralysed man whose brain has stopped functioning is not able to have any attraction for the delicious sweets of he was so fond a few days back, and neither would he be attracted by the soothing sound of his favourite song. This fact is symbolically stressed by saying that all other Naadis have their origin in the Sushumna Naadi. This fact is established in the human anatomy which says that the spinal cord has 31 pairs of nerve—called the spinal nerves—branching out from it to different parts of the body, and that it connect the brain to the remotest corners of the body through a network of nerves centered around the central nervous system. Therefore, this Sushumna Naadi plays a pivotal role in the 'conscious life' of a man. Refer verse no. 22 also.]

14. The point in the body from where all the Naadis derive their powers is at a level higher in the body, and all their branches spread out from there to the lower parts of the

body to control them. [This is a clear reference to the *brain* located in the head and which controls all the functions of the body by sending relevant instructions to the concerned organs and tissues through the path or medium of the Naadis by way of electrical impulses much like modern day data cables or optical fibers that carry messages and data across the globe. Just like all commands and control systems have a central unit or 'server' which monitors and controls the entire setup, all the nerves are said to originate in the brain in the sense that it is their control and command centre and it is from here that their fork out to distant corners of the realm of the body of the creature to carry the message of the brain to them, thereby forming a dense network throughout the body much like the network of arteries, veins and capillaries that help in circulation of blood but are deemed to have their origin in the heart because, as far as they are concerned, the heart is their control and command centre; it is the heart that pumps blood in them. Likewise, it is the brain that sends electrical signals in the form of consciousness and life to all corners of the body, and also receives the sensory perceptions pertaining to the external world through the same network in the form of electric signals. It is the brain that controls all the vital functions of life in the body, and makes the body relevant to the world and vice versa.]

There are said to be seventy two thousand Naadis in the body, and they spread out in the subtle space filled by the subtle wind in the body. [The difference between the Naadis that carry life impulses to and from the brain and the ones that carry blood to and from the heart is that the former carry stimuli in the form of subtle electric currents flowing through them unlike the ones going to the heart which carry more gross forms of life in the form of physical blood. This fact is depicted here by saying that the Naadis having their origin in the center which is at a higher level of the body move through the subtle space and air.] (14).

[Note—It is important to note that earlier it has been said that all the Naadis have their origin in the knot of nerves located in the region of the navel and the groins, in the region of the Mooladhar Chakra and the Nabhi or Mool Kand, and then branch out from here to various parts of the body—refer verse nos. 16-27 of Canto 5. On the face of it there appears to be contradiction between what is said in this present verse no. 14 and these verses, but on close examination we see what they mean. These Naadis get their electrical charge or battery-recharging in the lower region of the body in the abdominal area where the Kundalini and the Mooladhar Chakra as well as the Manipur Chakra are located. The rhythmic movement of the muscles of the abdomen can be likened to the continuous pumping of air into the furnace of the ironsmith by a similar movement of his bellows which keeps the furnace 'charged'. If this pumping stops, the fire in the furnace would gradually die out; it would be 'discharged'. But the area of the body from where the Naadis get their command and to where they report is high up in the brain. The term 'origin' is not to be taken too literally and the hidden meaning is to be deciphered to understand the proper implication of these verses. The brain is the 'origin' of all commands that the Naadis carry to different parts of the body and keep the latter functioning normally, and if the brain is dead then no matter whether the Naadis are kept alive or energized by the Mooladhar Chakra from where they have had their physical origin, the Manipur Chakra from where they get electrically charged by the abdominal pulsations, and the Kundalini which keeps the fire alive and burning robustly so as to provide the necessary impetus for success in Yoga, they would be of no use for the living being.]

15. All the accesses to the Kundalini (the coiled energy center at the base of the spinal cord) are blocked by these Naadis lying at all possible odd angles to give effect to this blockade (15).

16. If one acquires the knowledge and necessary skills to straighten out the Sushumna Naadi by untangling and jerking it into activity with the help of the Pran Vayu (the vital wind in the body), he can obtain Moksha (or get liberation and deliverance from remaining trapped in this body).

This is achieved by restricting the vital wind (i.e. the Apaana wind) by constricting and pressing the anus¹. This helps one to separate this Sushumna Naadi from the clutch of other Naadis (because this heated wind would then sneak into its bore and wiggle it subtly to soften it up, lose its rigidity and make become more flexible; this helps the Sushumna Naadi to get disentangled from the clutch of other Naadis clinging to it; it also helps to rejuvenate it and literally wake it up from its hibernating state of dormancy) (16).

[Note—¹This process is called the 'Mool Bandh' and it is described in detail in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 46-47 of Sam Veda tradition, in Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 42, Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 117-122, and Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 103-105 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

17. The breath should be held inside the body (when the anus is being pressed to activate the Apaana wind) by first inhaling it through the nostril that is said to be the passage of the 'Chandra Swar', i.e. the left nostril through which the Ida Naadi passes. [This helps to build up sufficient pressure inside the abdomen, help in concentration and diverting all available energy of the body to give effect to the attempt of diverting the lower wind, the Apaana wind, to activate the Sushumna by entering it.]

The seventy two thousand Naadis form a cage around the Sushumna Naadi (17).

18. The Sushumna Naadi personifies the divine glorious dynamic energy of Shiva, called 'Shakti'. All other Naadis are mere its attendants; they are inconsequential as compared to this Naadi.

The exhilaration-providing nerve, or the nerve which helps to produce the feeling of extreme ecstasy and when it is massaged by the vibrations of Naad resonating in it, is located in the real of the mouth where the tongue has its base¹. [The area of the body where this happens is the 'Kantha Chakra' or the throat Chakra.] (18).

[Note—¹This is why when one has a sense of titillation and extreme sudden cause of excitement such as when there is great merriment, or when some extremely exciting or good news is heard, or something suddenly tickles one's sides or the sole of his foot, a peculiar exclamatory shill cry or a giggling or chuckling sound involuntarily emanates from the throat. In the present context the implication is that at the instant when the Sushumna Naadi is activated, a peculiar sense of titillation and ecstasy follows which results in an involuntary exclamation of exhilaration blurting out from the practitioner's throat which would resemble the merry bleating of a sheep, or the chuckling of a joyous monkey, or the giggle of excited children heard when they are extremely overjoyed and happy.]

19. In order to activate and control the Naadis (nerves) situated above this place (the throat as described in verse 18), one should subtly hum the relevant Mantra and invoke

the supreme Shakti (Brahm) that is located in the region called the Brahm Randhra (which is located on the top of the head around the cranium). [That is, once the practitioner has successfully eased the Pran Vayu in the Sushumna Naadi and then has witnessed the extreme titillation produced by it, resulting in his involuntarily chuckling and sighing in ecstasy, he should then hum the Mantra dedicated to Brahm, and it is the divine Mantra 'OM'. Repeating this OM very softly and in a prolonged manner produces a sound in the head which resembles the buzzing or humming of the bumble bee. This sound acts as a massage for the nerves of the brain and titillates them further.]

As soon the sensation of a bumble bee flying around, humming and buzzing around the head is felt, the practitioner should focus his attention on it and abandon the idea or thoughts of getting back to the humdrum life in this mundane world. In other words, he should prefer to remain lost in the state of Samadhi (which is a trance-like state) attained by this eclectic and divine feeling of ecstasy obtained by doing meditation (19).

20. He should contemplate thus—'I bow reverentially to the supreme transcendental Soul which resides in the bosom of all the living creatures, who continuously arrive and depart from this mortal world in an endless cycle of birth and death, in the form of a 'Hans'¹, literally a divine Swan but used as a metaphor for the pure consciousness that forms the Atma or the true self of all living beings. This Atma which is as pure as the Swan is distinct from the creature because it remains steady and constant, without arriving or departing from anywhere.

This Hans does not get involved in worldly activities and it is the illuminator of the mind-intellect complex, thereby being the destroyer of the darkness caused by ignorance and its attendant delusions. [That is, the pure consciousness provides the mind-intellect complex with the necessary wherewithal to gain enlightenment, erudition and wisdom. If the creature allows the mind-intellect complex to work under the overall guidance and control of its consciousness, it would be self-illuminated in the sense that it would be driven by conscience and be enlightened and wise, but if it allows the mind-intellect to be influenced by the enchanting inputs gathered by the sense organs from the external world of sense objects which are notorious for their deluding effects and the alluring bait of sensual pleasures and material comforts that they throw to trap the creature in their snare, the creature would be engulfed in a horrifying veil of darkness symbolising ignorance and delusions.]' (20).

[Note—¹The *Swan* is used in the Upanishads as a metaphor for the pure self of the creature. In Yoga Upanishads it is said that the heart is shaped like a swan to indicate its inherent purity. The Hanso-panishad which is the fourth Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes the metaphysical importance and spiritual significance of this metaphoric Swan. The great Mantra 'So-a-ham' ('that is me') also has its origin in the word Hans. Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11 of the present Yogshikha Upanishad.

The enlightened and realised person thinks of himself as a Swan and feels exhilarated that he is not an ordinary man bogged down by worldly fetters, but an exalted soul that is like a Swan.

The bird Swan or Hans is considered the most pure, clean, wise, erudite and clever among the birds. It is said to eat pearls, which means it picks up and accepts only the best amid the variety of things available to it in the form of an assortment of various gems and jewels representing the dazzling charms of this world. It is also reputed to drink milk

leaving aside the water content in it symbolising its ability to imbibe the essence and the best, and leave the rest aside. It is also the vehicle of Goddess Saraswati, the patron Goddess of knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, speech and learning, indicating that it bears these glorious virtues. Hence, the reference to a swan while describing a creature conscious of the vital wind or Pran passing through him means the basic, inherent and intrinsic tendency of that wisened and intelligent creature is to be the best, most pure and divine, wise, awakened and enlightened, adroit, clever and sagacious like the swan, and pick all the goodness and forsake all that is bad in this world. Saraswati rides on a swan, symbolising the creature's inborn enlightenment and excellence of his mental caliber. Symbolically, Saraswati resides in his Pran because it rides on the swan, i.e. in his heart, throat and mind—that is, his heart has purity of emotions, he speaks well of all, and his wise words are sought after by all as priceless gems of wisdom, and his mind is intelligent, discerning and noble. A wise man is expected to pick the truth from amongst the basket of assorted charms present in this creation, and leave aside the non-truths.

The alphabet 'Ha' of the word 'Hans' is sounded by the vibration of the exhaled wind passing through the vocal cords present in the throat or the wind pipe which connects to the nose, while the alphabet 'Sa' is sounded by the root of the tongue which opens into the mouth when the breath is inhaled. Both the nose and the mouth open in the same cavity called the throat. Hence, the inter relationship between 'Ha' and 'Sa' is evident. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the divine swan, but he was unaware of his own divinity and sublimity, his exalted and noble stature, till that was pointed out to him. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan.

During the twenty-four hour period covering a single day and night, a person inhales and exhales, or breathes, roughly twenty-one thousand times, because each cycle of inhalation and exhalation is equivalent to saying one Mantra 'Hans' consisting of the two syllables 'Ha and Sa' (refer Dhyānbindu Upanishad, verse no. 63).

The Dhyān Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 24 and 62-63, of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which primarily deals with meditation and contemplation on Brahm in order to obtain emancipation and salvation of the soul of the creature says that the supreme transcendental Brahm, known also as Pranav, resides in the heart of all the living beings in the form of a Hansa. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the divine swan, but he was unaware of his divinity and sublimity, his exalted stature, till that was pointed out to him in this verse. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must do not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan.

The Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 82-83 of Sam Veda tradition describes this Swan in the context of Yoga. Let us see what it has to say in this context—

“Verse 82--The 'Hansa' resides gloriously and majestically in the center of the two eyes of a creature during the waking state of consciousness. The letter 'Sa' of the Hindi/Sanskrit alphabet represents the 'Khechari Mudra' of the Yogi which is certainly the personification or the image of the word 'Twam' (82).

Verse 83--The letter 'Ha' represents the supreme Lord of creation, called 'Parmeshwar' which is certainly symbolised or represented by the word 'Tat'. [That is, the two syllables of the word 'Hansa', meaning the divine swan, are 'Han' and 'Sa' which stand for the two words of metaphysics which have profound impact—the 2nd word is 'Twam' and the 1st is 'Tat' corresponding to these two syllables respectively.]

Any person who concentrates his mind and attention, and contemplates and meditates upon the letter 'Sa' shall surely become akin to, or equivalent to the form or the image represented by the letter 'Ha'. This is called contemplating upon and practicing of the twin tenets of 'So-a-ham' and 'Tattwa-masi' (83) [82-83].

The Upanishadic sage establishes uniformity and oneness with the two great philosophies and metaphysical concepts of the scriptures — 'So-a-ham' which means 'that is me', and 'Tattwa-masi' which means 'the essence is pure consciousness and it is me'. The word 'that' refers to Brahma which is the universal and absolute Truth and Reality about the existence, and has the qualities, inter alia, of enlightenment, of being eternal, omnipotent, universal, omnipresent, immanent, omniscient etc. When the seeker/aspirant focuses his attention on the self represented by the letter 'Sa' (self) and the 'Khechari Mudra' (when he is unconscious of the external world and focuses his attention on the glorious supreme entity present in the center of his eyebrows), he realises the truth of the maxim 'So-a-ham'. When he opens his eyes of wisdom, the truth of the 2nd tenet 'Tattwa-masi' dawns on him. Put simply, it means that the creature realises that 'he is the same as the supreme Brahma who resides in his Atma/soul present in his bosom/heart'. At the same time, 'the external world seen through this eye of wisdom symbolised by the presence of the divine swan in his eyes is the same Brahma who has revealed himself in this multifarious, diverse and myriad world'. This is the essential truth, or 'Tattwa'.]

21. The cosmic sound called Naad which is heard in the head during the practice of Yoga (which resembles the humming of the bumble bee as described in verse no. 19 above) is distinct from all other worldly sounds. This is because the Naad is heard even without speaking or uttering any word and it is also not the sound heard when one sings or a musical instrument is being played. That is why it is called 'Anahat', or the sound produced without any friction or one entity being rubbed against another or hitting another to produce it. In other words, it is 'self produced'. [Obviously there is no beating of anything or friction between anything in the cosmic bowl where the primary sound of Naad was produced. It is simply 'self produced'.]

In the core or the central point of this cosmic Naad is the entity that is self-illuminated, and hence called 'Joyti' which means 'light'. This subtly visible Joyti has an invisible subtle component called its Mana (mind-intellect complex). When this Mana is dissolved (eliminated or decimated) into nothingness, it is said to be transformed into the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu (21).

[Note—The cosmic Naad is the invisible and attributeless body of Brahm. The situation can be compared to an oil lantern which burns with a soft hissing sound. When one come in the vicinity of this lantern, one would hear this hiss which makes him aware that something is burning nearby. Then one sees the light and realises that the sound is emanating from it. The light is the visible aspect and the hissing sound is the invisible sign indicating the presence of the lamp. The wick of the lantern is the Mana which makes it possible for both the light and the sound to come into being, because had there been no wick in the lantern the very existence of both would not have been possible in the first place. And finally the oil in the lantern is the central cause by which the lantern gets its light or the ability to light the world around it, and therefore it is like the hidden and subtle Lord Vishnu who is at the core but behind the curtain in the whole game plan of this creation. When the lantern's wick is cut off from the tip, the light and sound would

automatically be cut out, but as long as there is oil in it, it can always be lighted again by raising the wick.

In the context of this manifested world, the Pran, the vital wind force of life which is a metaphor for life itself, is the Naad because any sound requires the medium of air to travel in waves. All forms of life are characterised by being constantly on the motion like the waves of sound, and sound itself is also a symbol of life inasmuch that where there is no sound at all we say that there is the 'silence of death'. The visible world is the 'revealed' or 'lighted' aspect of Brahm; the world is actually a manifestation of the invisible and attributeless Brahm in its gross and visible form having attributes. The world is the 'lighted' aspect of Brahm because it is the light emanating from the self-illuminated Brahm or consciousness that lights up the world for the creature, for had there been no consciousness everything would be submerged in pitch darkness just like the period that immediately follows after doomsday. This light and consciousness not only illuminates the world but also indirectly illuminates Brahm just like the light of the sun which lights up the world, gives it its life, energy and vitality and also tells us about the presence of the sun in the sky. Another example is the glow-worm which also is self-illuminated and its presence is known by its own light. Therefore, the enlightened view of the world is one in which the latter is seen in the glory and majesty of the Brahm.

The world can also be compared to the moon because the world is visible as a reflection of the majestic glory of Brahm just like the case of the moon which shines by the reflected light of the sun. Further, since the world is the creation of the Mana (mind of the creature) and the Moon God is the patron God of the Mana, this analogy seems apt. The world exists because of the Mana, i.e. it is the mind that enlightens the Atma which is the creature's true 'self' that such and such world exists. If the Mana is shut off as is done during meditation, the world would cease to exist. When this happens, what remains? It is the pure 'self' or the pure consciousness that remains after the entire external drama is shut off from view. This Atma is Brahm personified, and Brahm and Vishnu are synonyms because the latter is another name for the Viraat Purush which is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm that is invisible, attributeless and subtle as compared to the visible aspect of Brahm in the form of the gross world. It is from this invisible Viraat, an entity that is characterised by its vastness and infinite dimensions, that the rest of the visible creation, that is similarly vast and infinite, has manifested.]

22. Some wise ascetics assert that the Sushumna Naadi is the foundation for spiritual elevation and the base from which one can achieve success in Brahm realisation. They call it a manifestation of Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom and enlightenment. [In other words, this is the Naadi which can lead one to the supreme state of spiritual realisation and enlightenment.]

It is this Naadi that creates this world and it is in it that the world dissolves¹ (22).

[Note--¹This is because the Naadi is the main carrier of all senses and consciousness in the body. If the Naadi is paralysed, the world ceases to exist and matter. It has been said that the world exists because the Mana or the mind thinks that it does, and this mind gets its inputs of the external world, it becomes aware that the world exists at all because it is fed with information obtained about it by the external sense organs of the body which collect information and transmit them to the mind through the means of the network of nerves (Naadis). Even the internal organs of the body get their instructions from the brain through this network. Hence, the Naadi is symbolically responsible for the creation and destruction of the world. In this context, refer to verse nos. 8-13 and the notes accompanying them.

Again, the Upanishads say that when the man sleeps, i.e. when the external world has ceased to exist for him, even then the vital winds called Pran keep on moving through the Naadis, keeping the man alive. If this does not happen, he would be paralyzed and even die. Refer Dhyani Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 58-60, and Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 12 which says that when the man is asleep, his Prans move along the various Naadis present in the body.].

23. One should take the shelter of a Guru (a wise and erudite teacher who knows the esoteric secrets of Yoga). [This is to ensure that there is a constant presence of someone who would remove doubts and confusions that occur in one's spiritual endeavour and who would show the correct path to be followed and also give expert advice and guidance when needed. The scriptures are very abstract and often appear to be speaking in contradictory terms. It is here that the role of the true Guru comes into play, but for this to happen he himself must be an expert on the subject. Otherwise it would be very dangerous and have horrendous consequences for the disciple. Refer verse no. 79 of this Canto 6 also.]

When the basic energy center called the 'Adhar Shakti' goes to sleep, the world would also go to sleep. [In other words, when the central nervous system represented by the Sushumna Naadi comes to a standstill, the creature would either be completely paralysed or even die. Thus the world would have no relevance for him. When one sleeps, the sense organs cease to function because the nerve points located on the surface of the body become inactive and do not carry the incoming signals from the sense organs to the brain and its response or instructions back to these sense organs to act accordingly. This is a metaphoric way of saying that when the Naadis sleep the world would also sleep, or cease to exist.] (23).

[Note—Refer verse nos. 8-14 of this present Canto 6 in this context. The word *Adhar* or *Aadhaar* literally means support, basis, base, rest, stay, backbone, substratum, principle, foot, pillar, prop, shoulder, shore, dike, and a means of subsistence. It refers to the base or foundation of anything, any structure or any event. For example when any unfortunate event happens, we try to ascertain the cause or the basic reason why it happened. Once it is determined, the rest is easy to follow. The word *Shakti* however means energy, vitality, stamina and strength. It is the energy trapped in the triad of the Sushumna Naadi, the Mooladhar Chakra and the Kundalini that is sought to be harnessed by the ascetic for his spiritual endeavour of Brahm-realisation leading to his attaining an eternal state of blessedness marked by extreme ecstasy and bliss as well as in aiding him in his liberation and deliverance from the fetters of this body and the world.

In the present case, the triad consisting of the Sushumna Naadi along with the Mooladhar Chakra and the Kundalini plays an all important role in not only keeping the nervous system of the body functioning normally but also is used in the process of Yoga to achieve a spiritual high. The subtle dynamic cosmic energy present in the body is located here and the ascetic strives to arouse it and harness its astounding potentials for his own spiritual well being and upliftment. Since the man's entire life and all his activities revolve around the consciousness present in the body, as the body without consciousness would be a dead body which is good for no one, this apparatus consisting of the Sushumna Naadi, the Mooladhar Chakra and the Kundalini is considered as the pillar, the foundation and the basis of obtaining enlightenment and liberation according to the philosophy of Yoga. Therefore this apparatus is called the Adhar Shakti for the ascetic, the one which empowers the ascetic to progress steadily in his spiritual endeavours and provides him with sufficient energy and vitality to obtain success in it.]

24. When this Adhar Shakti (the nerve system which is symbolised by the Sushumna Naadi in the case of this Yoga Upanishad) is sufficiently activated and energised, the world too becomes alive and active (as explained in previous verses). The eclectic knowledge of this Adhar Shakti paves the way for one to cross the realm of Tama (darkness) and reach the realm of exaltedness and supremacy (i.e. obtain spiritual light and enlightenment) [Darkness is like 'sleep' because it makes a man ignorant and oblivious of what is happening around him, while being 'awake' is synonymous for being enlightened and wise.] (24).

25. The knowledge of this fact destroys all 'Paaps'—i.e. all forms of misdeeds, misdemeanors, evils and other demeaning aspects of life and their attending inauspicious consequences having their genesis in darkness and delusions created by ignorance are dispelled, paving for a man's auspiciousness and all round spiritual elevation (25).

26. The Adhar Chakra (i.e. the Mooladhar Chakra located between the groins and the anus and from which the Nabhi Kanda rises—refer Canto 5, verse no. 5) is radiant and splendid with the brilliance of electric. This illumination is its natural quality and inherent to it. When the aspirant is able to have its 'Darshan', i.e. when he is able to experience its presence along with its brilliance by the process of Yoga and the grace of his enlightened Guru, he is able to obtain Mukti, i.e. he is deemed to have found the path of liberation and deliverance for himself and his soul. [This is because it is not so easy to experience this Chakra. It is a very subtle and mystical phenomenon that requires a great deal of hard practice, steadfastness of purpose and due diligence. But once its presence is ascertained, the rest is easy to follow because it is like finding the correct gateway to Mukti. It is the 'entrance' by which one becomes eligible to enter the Brahm Naadi that leads him ultimately to his goal of Brahm-realisation and self-realisation that culminates in bliss and ecstasy of infinite dimensions. Refer also to verse nos. 8-14, 22 of this Canto 6.] (26).

27. All the inauspicious as well as the auspicious effects of deeds done by the spiritual aspirant (called the Paap and Punya respectively) are burnt and reduced to ashes (i.e. made ineffective and neutralised) by the intense divine energy and dynamic spiritual potentials (called the Tej) of the Adhar Chakra¹.

The practitioner can stop the Adhar Vayu (i.e. the Apaana wind that is present in the lower part of the body and which is stopped from escaping through the anus by constricting the latter) and dissolve himself in the fathomless depth of the sky² (27).

[Note--¹The *Adhar* (pronounced as *Aadhaar*) *Chakra* is, as the name itself implies, is the swirling subtle energy center in the body that forms the basis of all spiritual achievements made by the practitioner of Yoga according to the philosophy pertaining to this school of thought. When the aspirant has activated this center it is but natural that it would thoroughly clean him before he can step ahead in his spiritual path by virtually putting him through the rigours of the 'fire test'. Spiritual enlightenment entails complete neutrality and equanimity towards everything pertaining to the gross world and the gross body. Deeds, whether good or bad, whether auspicious or inauspicious, are done by the gross body in the physical gross world, for neither the subtle part of the body, i.e. the mind and intellect, nor the sublime part, i.e. the pure consciousness (Atma), do any deed.

The Atma is absolutely neutral just like an Emperor should be, while the mind-intellect plays an intermediary role—on the one hand it receives inputs from the external world through the organs of perception of the gross body, and on the other hand it reports to the Atma, is subservient to it and is the ear and eye for the latter. So when the Atma decides to shut off the external world, the mind-intellect obeys its instructions and distances itself from the latter. This is the state of total equanimity and neutrality. In such a state no deeds are deemed to be done by the creature because the Atma, which is the true identity of the creature, is uninvolved in the deeds done by the body. The actual physical exercise of doing anything is carried out by the gross body only.

When an aspirant steps on the path of Yoga and he has reached a certain stage past the preliminaries so much so that he is able to focus his attention on kindling the energy of the Mooladhar Chakra or the Adhar Chakra, it is natural to assume that he has transcended the mundane and reached a higher state of existence. For an enlightened man it is expected that he must have risen above the concept of doing deeds and then desiring to enjoy the fruits of these deeds or fearing the evil effects of them. This is a metaphoric way of saying that all his deeds, auspicious or inauspicious, have been burnt and reduced to ashes, or made inconsequential or ineffective as far as his ‘true self’ or the Atma is concerned.

²This awareness of the stupendous power of the Mooladhar Chakra is the first step towards obtaining spiritual Mukti or liberation for the ascetic. His final goal is to detach himself from the entanglement of the body and become free like the sky and the wind which are eternally unhindered and unfettered. This is a gradual process, and the first step in this direction is the kindling of the energy of the Mooladhar Chakra so that the Apan wind can arouse the Kundalini and enter the Brahm Naadi which would ultimately lead to attainment of a ‘spiritual high’.

As one progresses in the spiritual path of Yoga, one reaches a stage called Samadhi, which is a state of consciousness when there is perpetual total loss of awareness of the gross body and the gross world even though the aspirant remains active in this world and does his duties normally. This is made possible because internally he is totally submerged in meditation and contemplation while remaining completely detached from the activities of the body which is the entity that actually does the deed. This state of existence is tantamount to complete ‘dissolution’ of one’s sense of self which one usually associates with the physical gross body. Once the boundary of the gross body is removed, the vital winds present inside the body would automatically merge with the cosmic wind or air element present outside the body in the universe. In other words, the state of ‘non-existence’ and ‘dissolution’ is obtained. This is ‘Jivan Mukti’ because the ascetic is still alive. It is also the ‘Videha Mukti’ in the sense that the body loses its effectiveness and relevance in his life who is absolutely unconcerned about it and its constant nagging demands or sufferings.]

28. Restrictions of the Adhar Vayu (the Apan wind) results in the body shivering and shaking. The ascetic begins to dance (i.e. his body shakes and shivers to such an extent that for all practical purposes it appears that he is dancing in a trance-like state) (28)

29. This state enables the ascetic to visualise the entire world in the Sushumna Naadi. This Naadi is the basis of existence of the entire creation along with all the Gods (the immortal and divine beings) and the Vedas (all forms of knowledge). Therefore a wise practitioner should strive to activate this Naadi and both experience and witness this holistic and divine view of existence from the perspective of Yoga (29).

[Note—Refer verse nos. 10-13 of this Canto 6 above.]

30. Behind the Adhar Chakra is the symbolic 'Triveni Sangam' (literally the confluence of the three holy rivers, viz. the Ganges, the Yamuna and the Saraswati). [It has been said earlier that the Mooladhar Chakra is triangular in shape. Refer Canto 5, verse no. 5. This is the significance here—this 'triangular shape' stands for the 'three holy rivers'.]

By symbolically taking a bath there and drinking or sipping the holy water of the place, the creature finds liberation and deliverance from this world (30).

31. It is here at Paschim Lingam that the door to enlightenment is situated, but it remains closed. When this door is opened, one is able to break all the fetters pertaining to the mundane and artificial world of delusions and obtain freedom from its shackling effects (31).

[Note—The 'closed door to enlightenment' refers to the closed Mooladhar Chakra, the Kundalini and the Sushumna Naadi. The 'opening of the door' implies that the ascetic has been able to unleash their astounding reserve of subtle energy that is now harnessed by him to obtain spiritual ecstasy and liberation from the shackling effects of the gross body on his Spirit.]

32. This is the symbolic location of the moon and the sun. [This has reference to the Ida and Pingla Naadis which originate at the base of the spinal cord along with the Sushumna Naadi and keep the mouth of the Kundalini closed. Further, the Manipur Chakra located in the region of the navel is the whirling energy center symbolically representing the sun and its stupendous cosmic energy. During Yoga, the practitioner opens the closed mouth of the Kundalini so that its energy can move up these Naadis making the creature spiritually aware of the true subtle world of his sublime consciousness as opposed to the gross world of which he was aware prior to this opening.]

It is here that the Lord of this world, called 'Vishwesh' (i.e. Shiva representing Brahm) also has his symbolic abode. [This has reference to the Mooladhar Chakra over which the symbolic Lingam of Shiva is situated. Refer verse no. 168 of Canto 1 and verse no. 5 of the present Canto 5.]

By becoming enlightened about this, one can become Brahm-realised. [This is because Yoga enables him to first activate the Mooladhar Chakra and subsequently kindle the hitherto dormant subtle cosmic energy trapped inside his Kundalini which snakes up the Sushumna Naadi. This latter Naadi is also called the Brahm Naadi because it goes up to the top of the head and reaches the brain. According to the philosophy of Yoga, when the vital winds called Pran move up this particular Naadi, the practitioner of meditation experiences an extreme sense of unparalleled ecstasy and bliss. These two latter sensations are like witnessing Brahm first hand. Refer verse no. 18. Further, at the higher level of Yoga, the Pran can even make its exit from the body of the ascetic by escaping through the hair-like slit on the top of the head, called the Brahm Randhra, as clearly laid out in the next verse no. 33-34 below.] (32).

33. The symbol of the supreme Brahm (in the form of the Shiva's Lingam) is located slightly to the left rear of the Mooladhar. A wise and erudite ascetic should be enlightened about it¹.

By piercing the hexagonal Chakra, the realised ascetic is able to make his exit through the Brahm Randhra² (33).

[Note—¹Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 72, 167-168; Canto 2, verse nos. 6 (Naad Lingam), 8-14, 20; Canto 3, verse nos. 1-15; Canto 5, verse nos. 2-5, 5-16 (as abode of Shakti); Canto 6, verse no. 33. (ii) The Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 80 describes the Shiva Lingam symbolically present in the body.

²Refer Canto 1, verse no. 177. The Pran enters the Sushumna Naadi and is propelled up by being heated and energised by the subtle energy of the Kundalini. This Naadi passes through various Chakras in the body which are like the different coordination centers for all the nerves spreading out to reach all the corners of the body. While passing through these centers, the consciousness in the form of Pran collects all information on the way and then when it finally reaches the mind (brain) it conveys all these to the latter which then sets out to perform its job of sifting through the mound of incoming data and selecting the important ones which require special attention of the intellect. The instructions of the mind-intellect complex are then transmitted back to the body and its various organs through the same network of nerves by which the primary and raw information was brought to it.

In the case of Yoga, the external inputs are cut off because the mind is focused on the inner self. This along with the breath control exercises called Pranayam help the ascetic to concentrate the strength and vitality of the Pran wind so much that it is enabled to enter the Sushumna Naadi through the path of the Kundalini. The next Chakra that the Pran enters is the Swadisthan Chakra which is said to be hexagonal in shape and located in the region of the base of the genitals. Refer Canto 5, verse no. 8. This is the one that is being referred in this present verse.

The Pran wind crosses it and moves further ahead to finally reach the top of the head where the Brahm Randhra is located. This is the hair like slit through which it is believed that Brahm had entered the body of the first creature (living being) at the time of creation when the latter was created in the image of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic invisible gross body of the sublime transcendental Brahm. This Brahm had then entered and took up his residence in the head from where he decided that he would control the rest of the creation. That is why the mind-intellect complex is said to be closely associated with Brahm because it is the brain that controls all the functions of the body besides being the seat of such grand virtues as wisdom, erudition, sagacity, intelligence, analytical skills, the ability to discriminate between the good and the bad and then decide on the merits of a given situation, and the grand virtue of enlightenment which distinguishes a wise man from an animal. As for the ascetic, if he wishes to obtain liberation and deliverance from this body, he can voluntarily make his exit from the latter by allowing his Pran or vital wind representing his life sustaining forces to make its exit from the Brahm Randhra. Should the ascetic decide to do so, his Atma, i.e. his pure consciousness would withdraw itself from the body and ride literally piggy back on the Pran while it makes its exit through the Brahm Randhra to obtain final emancipation and salvation. See verse no. 34 of this Canto 6 below. The discarded body would eventually disintegrate into its gross elements—viz. earth, water and fire. The air has already left it as the Pran, and the subtle sky or space present inside the body between the various internal organs, tissues and cells would automatically cease to have any existence once the physical structure of the body disintegrates into its elements. In short, all the elements are released and they merge with their primary cosmic forms once the consciousness and Pran leave the body.

The evidence of consciousness withdrawing itself along with the Pran is experienced when the organs begin to become numb and unconscious when the higher state of Yoga is reached. This helps the ascetic to make a painless exit from the body as compared to the death when the Pran is forced to leave the body against its wishes, because then it would try to cling to the body and would have literally to be pulled or torn out of it.]

34. If the Pran is able to carefully pass up through the Sushumna Naadi without getting diverted into the ducts present on the left and the right of it, i.e. without entering the left nostril through the Ida Naadi or the right nostril through the Pingla Naadi, it can go straight up to the head and make its exit from the body by piercing the skull and escaping through the Brahm Randhra (which is the hair like slit marking the place where the two hemispheres of the skull join). This helps the ascetic to attain the final destination of all spiritual endeavours which is literally called the 'Param Gati' and which means to obtain liberation and deliverance of the soul from this body as well as the world. [This is also called the final Mukti or Moksha—final liberation and deliverance, final emancipation and salvation.] (34).

35-36. As long as the living being represented by the Hans (i.e. the pure consciousness known as the Atma which metaphorically is represented by the Swan or Hans and which is the true identity of the creature) continuous to move up and down in the Sushumna Naadi, he is deemed to remain trapped in the cycle of birth and death.

On the contrary, when his Pran becomes steady in the Sushumna Naadi it acquires sufficient power and energy to break through the barrier of the sun and moon (35-36).

[Note—The 'sun' is represented by the Pingla Naadi or the right nostril, and the 'moon' by the Ida Naadi or the left nostril. The implication of the statement is that the breathing stops through the nostrils during the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam. During this state, the Pran wind is incarcerated in the body which acts like a closed pitcher (Kumbha), and subsequently it makes its exit not through the routine path of the nostrils but through the Brahm Randhra in the top of the skull. As it is obvious here, if the Pran exits through the nostrils as during normal breathing process, it is bound to oscillate between inhalation and exhalation, while if it goes out through the Brahm Randhra its exit would be final. The former would be tantamount to taking birth and death repeatedly, while the latter would be his final Moksha or Mukti.

It is a very interesting analogy here which can be interpreted in a different way also. The 'sun' stands for the day when one is involved in all sorts of physical activities involving the body and the material world which is visible and tangible. On the other hand, the 'moon' is a metaphor for the night when people sleep and the external world and its activities become irrelevant. The day is like 'birth' when the soul gets involved in this world, and the night is like 'death' when the same soul withdraws from the external world and becomes unconcerned with it. The day is comparable to the 'waking state of consciousness' and the night to the 'sleeping state of consciousness'.

In other words, as long as the Pran continues to move in and out of the body through the process of breathing, it would not allow the body to die and this process would metaphorically indicate that the ascetic continues to be moving in an endless cycle of birth and death. But if he wants to break free from this cycle, he would have to learn to control his breath, or in other words, learn to exercise self restraint. Once he is successful in this, the Pran would make its exit but not come back. That is, the Pran would now move *not* through the Ida or Pingla Naadis in and out of the left or the right nostrils respectively but would rather enter the Sushumna Naadi and go straight up to the head and escape through the Brahm Randhra. If 'exit of the Pran from the body is taken to be death' then this one-way passage of Pran through the Brahm Randhra would be the 'final death' of the body of the ascetic, thereby setting his pure conscious Atma free from the fetters of the gross body. This would be tantamount to his breaking free from the cycle of birth and death as well, or piercing through the sun and moon complex. This is because

the sun and the moon symbolically indicate this world consisting of an endless cycle of day and night. This is his 'Kaivalya Mukti'.

By practicing Pranayam the ascetic learns to control his breath and force his Pran, which has already entered the Sushumna Naadi by doing various Aasans and Mudras of Yoga, to move past the nostrils and reach the top of the head from where it would make its exit by the way of the Brahm Randhra. In other words, if the ascetic allows his Pran to move in and out through the nostrils, his body would be kept alive and his Atma would remain trapped in this body as well as the world. But when he becomes an expert in the practice of Yoga and stops the flow of breath through the nostrils by doing Pranayam, the only way the heated and activated wind can escape from his body would be the Brahm Randhra. Once the Pran leaves through this path, it would not be able to re-enter the body. This is a one way exit for the Pran as compared to the exit through the body under normal breathing process. Therefore, while the former would provide a permanent liberation from the body, the latter would symbolically mean going out (dying) during exhalation and coming back from where one has gone out, i.e. inhalation (taking birth again and entering a new body). Refer verse no. 51 of this Canto 6. The movement of the life consciousness in the different Naadis so as to keep the body alive and active in all planes of existence has been described in Paingalo Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 12, and Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 52-60.]

37-40. One should know that the eclectic path of Yoga is to establish a complete and comprehensive harmony, an unchallenged uniformity between all the elements of creation. [In other words, Yoga's main purpose is to bring together the individual creature's Atma, his individual consciousness, and the cosmic Atma or the cosmic Consciousness so as to remove the apparent differences and disparities between them and instead establish an undisputed uniformity between them. This is called the Kaivalya form of Mukti, or the form of spiritual liberation and deliverance, the soul's emancipation and salvation which is unique and one of its kind in the sense that no trace of duality is ever left. It is stressed that to achieve this end, the ascetic has to bring together all his vital winds and merge them with the main wind called the Pran and then collect the Atma and exit from the body to become one with the cosmic wind or air element present outside his body. When this happens, the body would eventually disintegrate into its primary elements which would merge with their respective cosmic counterparts, thereby giving effect to the principle aim of Yoga—bringing together the elements of creation.]

If the Mana's (mind's) propensity to remain restless, agile, fragmented and fragile is removed by fixing it (i.e. its concentration) in the Sushumna Naadi during the practice of Yoga [37] even for a moment or half a moment [38], if the ascetic finds his independent conscious self (i.e. his consciousness as existing in his various organs, both external as well as internal) dissolved into one uniform entity simply known as 'consciousness' in the Sushumna Naadi just like a lump of salt dissolved in water becomes inseparable from the water, or milk and water become inseparable from one another when they are mixed together [39], it can be said that it is only then that all the knots that symbolise his doubts and confusions (regarding what is meant by the concept of non-duality and the main purpose of Yoga) would be removed. These knots of ignorance and delusions keep him tethered to this gross body and the gross world, creating a false notion of duality which create imaginary shackles for his Atma and prevent its emancipation and salvation. When this is made effective, the ascetic becomes as free as the sky (i.e. he is not shackled and tied to anything like the sky element which

is eternally free from any fetters) and obtains the supreme state of liberation called 'Param Pad' [40]. (37-40).

41. The spiritually auspicious effect of bathing in the holy river Ganges on its banks at the pilgrim site called Manikarnika Ghaat¹ or at the confluence of this river and the ocean² or even in the ocean itself³ is not even one-sixteenth as compared to allowing the consciousness to flow unhindered in the Sushumna Naadi during the process of Yoga (41).

[Note—¹The *Manikarnika Ghaat* is situated in the ancient city of Varanasi in northern India on the banks of the holy river Ganges. It is believed that Lord Shiva provides emancipation and salvation to all those who are cremated here.

²The *confluence of Ganges and the ocean* is called the holy site of Ganga-Sagar located near the eastern Indian metropolis of Calcutta where river Ganges flows into the Bay of Bengal. The famous Kapil Muni Ashram (hermitage of sage Kapil) is situated here.

³The famous points where the *ocean* is regarded as being as holy as the Ganges and provides the same spiritual benefit for those who take a bath there are primarily three—in the eastern shore of India at Puri where the famous temple of Lord Jagannath is located, in the southern tip of India where the famous temple of Rameshwaram dedicated to Lord Shiva and said to be consecrated by Lord Rama himself is situated, and in the western shore at Dwarka where Lord Krishna had his capital.]

42. Having an auspicious sight of the religious mountain called 'Shail'¹, to die in the holy city of Varanasi², to drink the holy water of the pilgrim site of Kedarnath³, and to be spiritually aware of the Sushumna Naadi where the Pran moves during the practice of Yoga—one's spiritual Mukti (emancipation and salvation; liberation and deliverance) is made possible by all of them. [Or in other words, the ascetic can expect to get the same spiritual reward of Mukti by concentrating on the Sushumna Naadi and making his Pran flow through it as he would get by the other three methods mentioned in this verse.] (42).

[Note—¹*Shail* is the famous Mt. Kailash situated in Tibet and dedicated to Lord Shiva; said to be the Lord's terrestrial abode.

²*Varanasi* is situated on the banks of river Ganges in northern India where it is believed that Lord Shiva utters the famous Mantra of Lord Ram in the ears of a dying man, thereby providing certain emancipation and salvation to his soul.

³*Kedarnath* is situated in the Himalayan range on the northern side of India and has the famous temple of Lord Shiva. There is a famous freshwater lake located here, and it is called the 'Mansarovar Lake' where the Gods are said to take their bath. Its twin site is Badrinath which is also located in the Himalayas and is dedicated to Lord Vishnu.]

43. The auspicious effects of doing one thousand Ashwamedh Yagyas¹ and one hundred Vajapaye Yagyas² are not equivalent to even one sixteenth part of the spiritual benefits got from focusing one's attention and concentrating the consciousness in the Sushumna Naadi (43).

[Note—¹The *Ashwamedh Yagya*—This is called the horse sacrifice because a horse is sacrificed in it. It is a most ancient sacrifice and can be successfully done by very powerful kings or emperors. The horse is let free to go anywhere it wants for one year and the land where it sets foot is either annexed by treaties or by force in war. The actual sacrifice is though done for only three days. The sacrificial horse is protected by the army

and if by chance it is killed by the opposing king then the sacrifice is deemed to be defiled. In practical terms, it was a means to spread a king's area of influence.

²The *Vajapeya Yagya*—This is performed by one who desires unlimited dominion. This sacrifice had many special features and the number 17 plays a dominant role in it—for there are 17 animals that are sacrificed, 17 objects are distributed as fees for the priests, and it lasts for 17 days culminating in a chariot race in which the patron who does the fire sacrifice is made to win at any cost.]

44. One who perpetually remains moving in the realm of the Sushumna Naadi, i.e. one who does Yoga on a constant basis, deriving immense bliss and great satisfaction from it and remaining focused on achieving success in his spiritual aim of obtaining self-realisation and Brahm-realisation by keeping the Sushumna Naadi activated and the Pran diverted into it and away from other parts of the body by constantly practicing the various aspects of Yoga, is deemed to be free from all sins and their wicked effects. He therefore becomes entitled to obtain the supreme transcendental state of Mukti (spiritual emancipation and salvation; liberation and deliverance of the soul from the fetters of the body and the world) (44).

45. (That is why--) This Sushumna Naadi is regarded by ascetics as the greatest of pilgrim sites, as the best form of Japa (repetition of Mantras—by metaphorically allowing the Pran or the vital wind to oscillate through it repeatedly), as the best form of Dhyān (concentration of mind, focusing of attention, contemplation and meditation), and the best destination for one's spiritual endeavours (i.e. it is the best path one should seek if one wishes true Mukti or freedom from the fetters of the body and the world) (45).

46. A fraction of the auspicious value of doing Dhyān (concentration of mind, focusing of attention, contemplation and meditation) through the medium of the Sushumna Naadi, i.e. doing Yoga when this particular Naadi is activated, is many times greater than doing other forms of religious rites such as performing many sacrifices, giving away many types of donations or doing huge charities, or keeping religious fasts on many auspicious occasions (46).

47. The supreme cosmic dynamic energy of the transcendental Brahm who resides in the realm of the Brahm Randhra situated at the top of the head is revealed in the form of 'Shivaa'. [Yoga Upanishads treat Shiva as another form of Brahm, and therefore the dynamic energy of Brahm is known by the name of Shivaa.]

This cosmic dynamic energy of Brahm is also known as the pure consciousness and it has an extensive presence in the Sushumna Naadi. [This is because the central nervous system of the body represented by this Naadi is at the core of the man's conscious life and keeps him aware of everything in this world. If the central nervous system blinks even for a moment, the man would fall down unconscious no matter how healthy his other organs are.] (47).

48. The cosmic 'Maya Shakti' (i.e. the great power of the Supreme Being to create delusions and keep the creature engrossed in its deceptions so that the cycle of creation set in motion by the Lord continues to roll on unhindered) is the grosser revelation of the dynamic powers of Brahm by which the latter created this illusion called the world. It is

said to be located in the front part of the forehead and is shaped like a lotus¹. In the middle of this lotus is located the transcendental cosmic energy of Brahm which is subtle in nature and is called the Naad Shakti² (48).

[Note—¹This symbolic lotus refers to the ‘Agya Chakra’. The forehead symbolically represents the head-light of Brahm much like we have headlights in a car because the eyes of the man’s body are located here. The eyes help the man to see the visible creation of Brahm which the latter has created using his maverick powers to create illusions, the power called *Maya Shakti* which literally means precisely this—illusion creating strength and powers. This world is the gross physical revelation of Brahm’s stupendous powers to create anything desired. Maya Shakti refers to this power of Brahm—to create an illusion which is so perfect and life-like that it appears to be true from all practical view points though it is basically an illusion. This is the great mystery of creation—the world is said to be illusionary on the one hand, and it is pervaded by Brahm who is not an illusion on the other hand. The secret is that the external features of the world as we see is an illusion just like the water seen in the desert mirage, but the underlying principle that creates this illusion in the desert is a scientific truth having a sound reason. Likewise, the world is created by the ability of the mind to imagine, which is actually Brahm’s maverick power on display. Brahm is regarded as being synonymous with wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and knowledge, so the subtle quality of the mind-intellect complex to be analytical, discerning, thinking intelligently, weighing all the pros and cons and then making decisions and arriving at conclusions—these qualities are the subtle revelations of Brahm. But the power of this same mind to imagine and create a astoundingly fascinating world of charming and enticing objects is a revelation of Brahm’s Maya Shakti. The man sees this illusions through his eyes situated in the forehead, and this fact is represented here by saying that the ‘Maya Shakti is located in the front of the forehead’.

²As compared to this Maya Shakti which has taken a gross form of the physical world having attributes and characteristic features, the *Naad Shakti* is very subtle and has no physical shape or form or attributes. This is because Naad refers to the sound element which does not have any shape or form. It is like the air and sky elements which too have no form or shape. Since sound is a form of invisible energy, it is the first subtle revelation of Brahm at the cosmic level. Scientists call it the ‘Big Bang’ at the time of creation, while in the sphere of metaphysics it is called ‘Naad’—both refers to sound. The concept of Naad and its origin in a point source called the ‘Bindu’ or dot have been explained extensively elsewhere in this Upanishad as well as in other Upanishads dealing with Naad and Bindu. See verse no. 49 below.]

49. At the ‘focal point’, literally called the ‘Bindu’, of this energy generation mechanism is the consciousness which has revealed itself in the form of the Jiva (living being). [This refers to the Atma which is the pure consciousness and the true ‘self’ of all living beings. At the micro level of creation, this consciousness is called the Jiva, while at the macro level the same entity is known as Brahm.] (49).

50. This consciousness indicative of the presence of Brahm in the living being in the form of his soul or Atma which gives the individual his ‘life and identity’ is revealed in its gross form as the heart (because without the heart no man can survive). The subtle form of the same divine and eclectic entity resides inside the middle of the heart or at the core of the heart (enabling the heart to beat). [In other words, the presence of the physical organ of the heart inside the body of a man is an ample proof of the presence of the life-

giving consciousness known as Brahm in his body because without the heart the man wouldn't survive even for a second. The heart maintains circulation of blood and through it nourishes and protects the whole body much like Brahm who nourishes and protects the entire creation. But the physical organ known as the heart is of no use if there was no subtle life-supporting cosmic energy inside it in the form of the Atma or consciousness that actually enables this gross organ to beat continuously unhindered throughout the life of a man. The heart beats due to the subtle electric current that helps its muscles to contract and expand. This 'electric current' is Brahm in the form of the Atma, the life-giving pure consciousness, residing in the heart of all living beings.] (50).

51. Under the influence of the Pran and the Apaana Vayus, the Jiva continues to oscillate up and down in the body. [This refers to the consciousness present in the body of all living beings which moves up and down the body and radiates to all its corners to keep the body alive and active. This consciousness helps the body to perceive the external world and respond to these perceptions through the organs of perception and action; this consciousness keeps the mind-intellect complex working in prime shape; this consciousness keeps the internal organs and the different tissues and cells of the body working in proper order; this consciousness drives the motor of the body of the creature called the Jiva. The two vital winds, viz. the Pran and the Apaana refer to the breath that is present in the upper part of the body and the wind passing down in the intestines and is predominantly located in the lower part. The rhythmic movement of the Pran acts like a pump that keeps the bladder-like body throbbing with life, while the Apaana helps it to eliminate the wastes that accumulate in the body. The Pran has a propensity to move upwards while the Apaana has a natural tendency to move downwards. This creates a symbolic oscillating movement for the consciousness, once going downwards along with the Apaana wind but immediately pulled up by the Pran wind only to be pulled down once again by the Apaana. This prevents the consciousness from escaping from the body—i.e. it remains trapped inside it. This is what is referred to in metaphysics as 'the Atma being trapped by the body'. Refer also to verse nos. 35-36 of this Canto 6.]

Since the vital winds (Pran and Apaana) as well as the consciousness (the Jiva's vital life-factors) are both invisible subtle and sublime entities, it follows that their movement in the body, whether to the right or to the left, are also invisible and imperceptible. [This refers to the flow of the Pran as breath through the right or left nostrils representing the Pingala and the Ida Naadis respectively. Breath is indeed invisible like the consciousness, and as is obvious now both are synonymous with life because no creature can survive without either of them.] (51).

52. Even as a ball tossed around by the hand never finds rest, the Jiva (the living creature represented by the consciousness present inside a gross body but usually understood to mean the physically visible body of the living being) never finds rest as it is incessantly and persistently tossed up and down by the Pran and the Apaana winds (52).

53. These two winds, i.e. the Pran and Apaana act to pull each other in the opposite direction. That is, the Pran pulls the Apaana in the upper direction, and the Apaana pulls the Pran in the lower direction.

This is metaphorically depicted by the two letters of the Mantra 'Hans', viz. 'Ha' and 'Sa'. In other words, the Jiva (consciousness) tries to go up and escape from the body while making the sound of the letter 'Ha', and then is pulled down back inside the body while making the sound 'Sa'. (53).

54. In this way, the Jiva (i.e. all living beings who breathe, for example a man) repeats this Mantra 'Hans-Hans' involuntarily while alive. But few understand its metaphysical and spiritual import. On the other hand, those ascetics who are able to grasp the great importance and significance of this eternal and imperishable divine Mantra are indeed wise, erudite, self-realised and enlightened ascetics. [Their entire life is spent in doing involuntary Japa, which is repeating of a divine Mantra and reaping its spiritual benefits, even without making any special efforts do repeat it and obtain its natural spiritual reward. Refer also to Canto 1, verse nos. 131-133; Canto 2, verse nos. 8-11; and Canto 6, verse no. 20.] (54).

55. Above the Kanda (the Mooladhar, also called the Mool Kand) is situated the stupendous source of subtle energy in the body in the form of a coiled structure called the Kundalini. [Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 168-169 and Canto 5, verse no. 5-6.]

This Kundalini can provide liberation and deliverance to wise, erudite and enlightened ascetics on the one hand while trapping those who are ignorant, deluded and stupid on the other hand. [This is because while the wise ascetic uses this Kundalini in the practice of Yoga to harness the latent cosmic energy trapped inside it for his spiritual enhancement leading to the state of extreme ecstasy and final liberation and deliverance from the body as well as the world, the stupid ascetic on the other hand would enjoy the attendant benefits of Yoga, such as the access to different Siddhis or mystical powers that give him immense authority and super human capabilities, enabling him to enjoy the great fame, attention and public adulation that they bring upon him which would have the effect of dragging him deeper and deeper into the quagmire known as the delusory world, thereby sucking him in and trapping him in instead of letting him find liberation from it.]

This fact is known only to the Yogis (i.e. to ascetics who practice the tenets of Yoga sincerely and diligently) (55).

56. In the entire creation consisting of the three worlds known as 'Bhu' or the terrestrial world or the mortal world consisting of living creatures, 'Bhuvaha' or the sky above the earth and the near space where the sun and moon etc. are located, and 'Swaha' or the distant heaven where the stars and Gods are present, the entities that personify the cosmic energy are such entities as the sun, the moon and the fire. But the combined light, energy, strength and vitality of these are no match for the majestic glory and stupendity, the divine qualities and sublime virtues that are possessed by the supreme transcendental and ethereal entity represented by the word OM. [This entity is 'Brahm', also known as 'Pranav'.] (56).

57. The divine supreme transcendental entity (Brahm) represented by the word OM is more glorious, stupendous and magnificent than the combined glory, stupendity and magnificence of the three Kaals (i.e. the powerful forces of Nature that operate in creation covering the three phases of time, viz. the past, the present and the future), the

three Devas (i.e. the three Gods, viz. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the annihilator or concluder), the three Lokas (i.e. the three worlds such as the terrestrial world, the nether world and the heaven), the three Swars (i.e. the three types of letters and their sounds, viz. the vowels having a short sound and the long sound, the consonants, and the sibilant letters), and the three Vedas (i.e. the Rig, the Sam and the Yajur Vedas) (57).

58. The tendency of the mind and its various faculties to remain ever restless, agile, freakish, volatile, fickle and unsteady is said to be the cause of this deluding world to come into existence, while the state when this mind becomes focused, steady, peaceful and calm is tantamount to obtaining Moksha (liberation from this entrapping world and its accompanying delusions and attendant miseries).

Hence, one should strive to steady and calm his mind and its various faculties by employing all the strength at his disposal as well as all the power of wisdom and intelligence that he possesses (58).

59. It is the sub-conscious mind and its ability to imagine and conceive things that has not only created this world of imaginary material things and all sorts of delusory perceptions but also expands this imaginary and deluding world so that it acquires an endless dimension.

Obviously, if this sub-conscious mind and its magnificent ability to imagine and remember imaginary things are done away with, the world would automatically cease to exist or matter at all. Therefore, all spiritual aspirants are expected to decimate the role of this tricky mind in their spiritual pursuit (because if they allow the mind to let it have its way then they are sure to waver and fall on the wayside) (59).

60. The Mana (the mind and its thoughts) is the progenitor of the notion of Ahankar (ego, pride and arrogance). The mind which is conditioned by the sense of ego and pride assumes the dimension of the sky, spreading its tentacles in every direction (i.e. it becomes a huge and insurmountable obstacle in one's spiritual path; no matter what effort the spiritual aspirant makes his ego and pride would put a spanner in the wheel of his progress)¹. The deluding world and its traps are the maverick creation of this mind corrupted by the element of Ahankar².

The wise ascetic must understand that this Mana is not his Atma or his pure 'self'. The Atma is much superior to the Mana; they are not only distinct from one another but the Atma is the Lord of the Mana and it is not the other way round³ (60).

[Note—¹An example would help to explain the implication of this statement. A rich man thinks that he is superior to others and would not like to sit on the floor with them. He would be proud of his worldly possessions that he thinks that he has produced by his own efforts or got as inheritance as a reward of his past good deeds and therefore has the right over them. He never would like to forgo his worldly material possessions and bargain them for the difficult life of a spiritual aspirant, such as leading an austere life and renouncing all material comforts of the world. Similarly a haughty scholar would never acknowledge that his knowledge is limited and so would steadfastly ignore good advice or seek more knowledge. This is because the element of Ahankar puts its leg in and prevents the wheel of wisdom and sanity from moving the chariot of unpretentious simplicity and humility—the hallmarks of spiritualism—ahead.

²It is to be noted that when Brahm had decided to create this world of unimaginable dimensions, the first thing that came into being was 'Ahankar', and the next was 'Maya'. That is, as soon as the immaculate and eternally pure Brahm thought that he has the power to do something as grand as starting the process of creation, the element of 'self pride' and 'ego' corrupted him. No sooner had this happened than the element of 'delusions' swamped him and overcame him from all the sides so much so that Brahm was literally swept of his feet and got himself sucked in the quagmire of the world that he himself had created. He was no longer free to relax and do meditation, for now he had to worry about the sustenance and protection of the world he had created himself. Not only this, he saw that his off springs started petty quarrels and indulged in squabbling, robbing the peace and tranquility that Brahm had been enjoying before this creation had come into being. So he decided to wind up the game, and this resulted in the conclusion of one phase of creation. But this notorious 'Ahankar' element of Brahm did not let him live in peace—for he could not digest the fact that he could not control his off springs and had to punish them by winding up the whole drama altogether. So he decided to give it another try and set out to create the second round of creation. And the cycle continued.

This should act as a beacon of warning for the spiritual aspirant—if this Ahankar is powerful enough that it did not even spare the almighty Brahm from its clutches and drew him in its vice like grip, what chance does an ordinary man has to stand against it? So he should endeavour to nip the bud before it blooms into a flower by cutting off the cause of this world altogether—i.e. to conquer, to vanquish and completely eliminate the mind and crush its maverick tricks. This would do away with Ahankar and also with the Maya that follows in its wake.

³That is, the spiritual aspirant should not despair at the worrying state of the Mana and be assured that though the mind has so many tainting scars influencing its working, it does not mean that the ascetic himself is impure and corrupt because his 'true and pure self' is the consciousness known as the Atma present in his heart which is a complete independent entity and has nothing to do with the Mana. So when it is said that he should conquer the Mana, it wouldn't harm his own 'self' in the least.]

61. It is the Mana (here referring to the mind and heart combine) that does deeds and gets involved in sins and wickedness. [The gross body is the entity that actually does the physical deed, but it does so at the instructions of the mind. The heart is the seat of emotions, so when the heart is involved in any deed, the creature becomes fully engrossed in it. Both the mind and heart play equal role in making the creature involved in any deed—the mind would control his body and divert his attention to the deed to be done, while the heart would make him endeared to the deed, enjoy it and therefore stick to it for a prolonged periods without getting fed up or weary of it. In other words, when it is said that one is fully engrossed or involved in any deed, it is implied that his mind and heart are both involved in the process. Now, the world is a charming proposition and when the mind and heart get to taste its sweet pill, they are so enamoured by it that they would go to any length to acquire its proximity and enjoy the comforts and pleasures that it has to offer. In this pursuit, they would compel the creature to commit horrendous sins and wicked deeds.]

If the Mana abandons its natural inclinations and habits (by becoming steady and focused on the spiritual path that it ought to follow instead of indulging ceaselessly in this world), there would be no such thing as sin or wickedness on the one hand, and auspiciousness and righteousness on the other. [That is, as soon as the wise aspirant realises the fact that all the problems he faces in his spiritual path are caused by the

Mana, he would immediately distance himself from the latter and the deeds done by the body under the instructions of the Mana. When this eclectic state of existence is actually achieved by the Atma which however is the truthful identity of the man doing the deed, he would not be bothered whether the deeds are good or bad, whether they are auspicious or inauspicious. Instead, there would be complete sense of equanimity and evenness in the way he treats this world and deals with it.] (61).

62. When a spiritual aspirant is able to see his own Mana with its own light of wisdom, erudition, discrimination, analytical thinking and logical reasoning, i.e. when he is able to consciously control his mind using its own faculties of intelligence, wisdom and discrimination to decide what is good for it and what is not, thereby becoming steady in his spiritual path by not having any deluding aspirations and worldly desires or getting embroiled in numerous confusions and doubts, and as a result obtains the eclectic state of profound self-control of all his different passions, natural inclinations and temperaments which in turn lead to a high degree of equanimity, contentedness, calm and poise—it is only then that he becomes eligible to have a first hand experience or a divine and holy vision of the supreme transcendental Brahm, something which is most rare and difficult otherwise (62).

63. When an ascetic is able to see his own Mana with its own light of wisdom, erudition, discrimination, analytical thinking and logical reasoning, i.e. when he is able to consciously control his mind using its own faculties of intelligence, wisdom and discrimination to decide what is good for it and what is not, it is only then that he is called an expert and accomplished ascetic. It is only then that he finds true Mukti or liberation and deliverance from the fetters of this world and its delusions. This is the successful culmination of his Yoga practice. It enables him to become indifferent towards everything non-real, non-essential and non-eternal. Instead, he remains focused in remembering the eternal, real and supreme transcendental Truth (63).

64-65. When a spiritual aspirant is able to see his own Mana with its own light of wisdom, erudition, discrimination, analytical thinking and logical reasoning, i.e. when he is able to consciously control his mind using its own faculties of intelligence, wisdom and discrimination to decide what is good for it and what is not, he becomes steady and unwavering in Yoga. Or in other words, he is deemed to be firmly established in Yoga and becomes an established ascetic. This enables him to rise higher in the echelons of those who practice Yoga and obtain a higher position in the hierarchy of ascetics. In effect, he becomes the great ascetic who is like the exalted Lord of all ascetics (a reference to Lord Shiva). [64]

Not only this, he is able to experience the ecstasy and blessedness of witnessing the supreme transcendental state obtained by the most exalted of ascetics. [65] (64-65).

[Note—The emphasis in verse nos. 62-65, 69 of this Canto 6 is on ‘control of the mind’ and the role it plays in helping one to obtain his soul’s peace. As we have seen earlier, it is the mind that is the cause of all troubles for us in this deluding and artificial world which is like a spiritual trap for the man. For example, if the mind decides that it is alright to live in any given circumstance or that the comforts and enjoyments derived from the material world are really not worth the effort made to acquire them, the man would find it easy to cope with even the most adverse of circumstances or lack of material comfort.

But it is the mind which sees that other people are enjoying this or that material comfort in this world and then it pokes the man and constantly keeps on nagging at him to go and obtain that thing of gratification for himself, leading to an endless cycle of unsatisfied desires and wants which can never give any rest to anyone. Once the man is able to train the mind to realise that all the things around him are perishable and non-desirable, that the world and its charms are imaginary and deluding while being spiritually demoting and dilapidating, that life itself is short and the soul has been going round and round in circles for innumerable births to take birth as a human being and this is its last chance to break free from this vicious cycle, and that therefore it should focus its attention on obtaining truthful spiritual liberation that can provide it with deliverance once and for all instead of frittering away this golden opportunity in oscillating between non-fulfilled desires and attempts to fulfill them, or wasting precious time to decide what is good and what is bad for it in the long run, or remaining confused about the truthfulness of the conscious Atma and the falsehood of the world around it, it is only then the man can find eternal spiritual peace, happiness and bliss. This very knowledge and awareness is tantamount to obtaining enlightenment and the great contentedness that accompany it. This is the culmination of the journey upon which he has embarked and is the aim of all his spiritual efforts when he had decided to study the scriptures, understand them and implement their doctrines in life as well as when he had made a Guru to help him in this endeavour so that he can find real and meaningful peace for himself.]

66. The supreme, transcendental, eclectic and divine entity known as Brahm, which is an epitome of such glorious virtues as eternal peace, tranquility, serenity and calmness, is much superior to and beyond other eclectic and divine entities such as Bindu (the dot on the top of the symbol for Brahm, i.e. OM, symbolising the origin of creation), Naad (the cosmic sound present in ether and representing the first discernible manifestation of Brahm in the form of sound and its attendant energy), Kalaa (the different aspects of creation revealing the varied qualities of Brahm), Jyoti (light and illumination symbolising wisdom, knowledge, erudition and enlightenment), Ravi (Sun), Chandra (Moon), the Dhruv Tara (the polar star which remains steady in its place, symbolising the grand virtues of being steady, unwavering, constant, perpetual, consistent and persistent). [These and other such entities are only short aphorisms expressing only a fraction of the composite divine majesty and astoundingly infinite glories of Brahm. Brahm has revealed in all these forms, each being a manifestation of one aspect of Brahm, and therefore each one of them depicts one or the other magnificently glorious and divine aspects of Brahm, but they do not define Brahm in its entirety.] (66).

67. When the self realised ascetic is able to experience first hand the presence of the supreme transcendental Brahm, he spends the rest of his life submerged in extreme bliss and ecstasy, laughing at will and generally being in a perpetual mood of merriment, elation and cheerfulness. In spite of this all round sense of contentedness and happiness, he is always wary and afraid of those things that can throw a spanner in this eclectic state of his blissful and peaceful existence—i.e. he is always scared of this world and its cunning tricks so much so that he remains constantly wary of them and keeps a constant vigil against the traps laid out by this world to ensnare him in its clutches. Once he has tasted the nectar of freedom, it is natural that he would abhor things that would cause him to be bonded once again (67).

68. He forestalls all causes that create sorrows and grief to him. He takes the shelter of wisdom and fortitude if such unfortunate sorrows and grief do occur. He is not attracted to and enamoured by any of the charms and attractions offered by worldly assets and prosperity. In order to keep his spiritual enemies at bay and prevent them from tormenting him unnecessarily, he prefers not to annoy them at all by maintaining a safe distance from them. This is accomplished by remaining completely indifferent towards and paying no heed to any of the sense organs of his own body as well as their respective objects of attraction in the external material world along with other deluding aspects of this world which he treats as being his spiritual enemies. In this way he is not only able to control his enemies but also keep them away from disturbing him. Being thus freed from this fear, he wanders happily and in a carefree manner in this world (68).

69. The spiritual aspirant must be alert enough to realise the moment when his sub-conscious mind and its subtle faculties of paying attention and concentrating upon some thing of importance have been diverted towards the sense objects of this world and involved in having an unending desire for them and then endeavouring to acquire them, because if he is vigilant enough he would take immediate remedial steps to rectify this misdemeanour or misadventure of the mind. The mind is so restless, fickle, undecided and unsteady that it has a propensity to be blown away easily by the slightest gust of breeze representing worldly charms that cause an endless chain of desires, aspirations, expectations and hopes.

So, by being constantly vigilant, the aspirant would prevent his 'self' from being forced to be on a compromising ground with his arch enemy (i.e. the world and its entrapping net of endless material desires and hopes for their fulfillment) due to the mischief created by a careless and fickle mind. [That is, by keeping a close watch where his maverick Mana is, the spiritual aspirant can pre-empt a wide swathe of problems that would otherwise besiege him if he lets off his guard even once or allows himself to be misled by delusions and cunning schemes of Maya. Verse no. 71 below narrates how the Mana can be controlled.] (69).

70. The potentials and powers of the Mana (mind) are similar to the majestic glories of such (visible) entities as the sun and the moon, while its ability to see and perceive is like the stupendous glory of the fire on display.

On the other hand, the Trinity Gods such as Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, nourisher and protector of the creation, and Shiva the concluder of creation, are merely a fraction or aspect of the (invisible) Bindu and Naad.

[In other words, the Mana is the most striking and forceful visible depiction of the astoundingly magnificent potentials of the supreme Brahm even as the sun and the moon in the sky and the fire on the earth showcase Brahm's glorious, overriding and unmatched cosmic authority and powers having amazing potentials and far-reaching effects. On the other hand, the Trinity Gods are not visible in their presence like the sun, the moon and the fire. They are invisible and more abstract than the sun, moon and fire which every living being is able to see for himself first hand. So, the latter (the sun, moon and fire) are a visible and comparatively grosser manifestations of the grand powers, potentials and authority of Brahm as compared to the former (the Trinity Gods which are more subtle and sublime manifestations of Brahm). Since this visible gross world is a creation of the

mind, the latter is compared to the other visible manifestations of Brahm such as the sun, the moon and the fire.] (70).

71. Constant paying of attention to and focusing of the mind on the essential element behind the concept of Bindu (i.e. by meditating upon the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm) helps in the decimation of all sorts of Vasanas (worldly passions, lust, desires and yearnings) that veil the aspirant and act as impediments in his spiritual pursuit and progress in it. [When the aspirant concentrates his attention on the power center called Bindu or dot in order to facilitate his meditation process, it is natural that he has to withdraw his mind and all the senses from all external influences of the world and every sort of diversions, and instead focus it on that Bindu. Otherwise he would not be able to meditate in the first place. This practice helps the mind to be trained enough to become independent and stand on its own feet; it helps the mind to learn to make itself free from all external influences and acquire sufficient strength and will power to withdraw from the outside world and remain focused on its chosen spiritual path once it decides to do so. When the mind takes this decision that it has got nothing to do with the external world of artificiality and delusions, and rather it should focus its attention on the primary spiritual goal of life which is to obtain self-realisation that leads to final liberation and deliverance of the soul from the cycle of birth and death and its attending delusions and horrors in this world, it would remain steady and unwavering in this endeavour by eliminating everything else that causes any kind of nuisance and hindrance in it by becoming immune to all sorts of influences exerted by the natural tendency of the body to swerve towards the material comforts and pleasures offered by the charming world in order to satisfy the desire of its organs for self gratification. It ought to be noted here that this is the reason why in early stages of the practice of meditation, the practitioner is advised to focus his eyesight on any object in front of him, such as a picture of his chosen deity or even a simple dot on the wall. This is to train the mind to remain focused on a 'Bindu' or dot or any specific object for prolonged periods of time, instead of constantly jumping from object to object quickly which is its natural habit.]

When this is brought about, the Pran Vayu (the vital winds in the body that keep it alive) also merges and becomes one with the Mana, because the mind (Mana) which is not influenced by any worldly desires and passions (called Vasanas) that the body naturally has becomes free from any kind of morally and spiritually degrading and tainting effects caused by the latter. Being superior to the vital winds, the mind can then exert its controlling effect on them, thereby effectively controlling the body itself through these vital winds. [The winds have a natural tendency to remain restless and be on constant move much like the mind. This is evident from the fact that the body continues to carry out its different functions internally even when the man is apparently sleeping and not appearing to do anything externally. While awake, the organs continue to perceive, voluntarily or involuntarily—such as the case when the skin continues to feel the bite of an insect or the touch of anything warm or cold even though the man might have closed his eyes, shut his ears, clamped his mouth tight and pinched his nose shut. Since all the functions of the body are controlled by the vital winds, when the body is brought under control by the practice of meditation, it is deemed that all these vital winds have also been controlled. Again, since it is the mind that is the ultimate controlling

center of the body, when it is self regulated and under control of the spiritual aspirant it becomes very easy for the latter to control everything else by the medium of the mind. So, when the vital winds have been brought under control as a result of practice of meditation, it is said that they have been subjugated by the mind. The vital winds and the body which is driven by these vital winds would then obey the command of the mind—and therefore remain under the control of the practitioner of Yoga. A wise ascetic has already become enlightened about the futility of pursuing this artificial world, the artificiality and the transient nature of its charms and pleasures, and has learnt that if he has to obtain final freedom from the prison of his body and being enslaved to this world and its sense objects, then he must avoid them completely by diverting his mind (Mana) and vital winds (Prans) away from it, and instead focus their combined energy to help him in progressing ahead in his spiritual path.] (71).

72. What is called Naad (the cosmic sound represented by the Mantra OM) is also known as Bindu (the metaphoric ‘dot or point-source’ from where this sound emanates) as well as Chitta (the invisible and subtle sub-conscious mind which works behind the scene). In other words, they are basically the same and are simply different manifestations in Nature (called Prakriti) of the same non-dual entity (known as Brahm). [In other words, the invisible, un-manifested and attributeless non-dual entity known as Brahm—which is at the core of this entire creation known as Prakriti, and which is represented symbolically by a ‘dot’ or a ‘point source which is vested with all divine authority, cosmic energy, stupendous strength and powers of creation’—has revealed itself in different subtle components of this creation known as Prakriti or Nature at the macro level, and the various subtle components of an individual’s nature at the micro level. Therefore, though each component appears to be distinct from the other, they are basically the same divine entity revealed in that form.]

When the spiritual aspirant is able to realise the oneness and non-dual nature of all these units of creation (Prakriti), he obtains immense contentedness of spiritual realisation and enlightenment which gives him great bliss and happiness, a great sense of joy of knowing the esoteric and sublime Truth and Reality of creation (72).

[Note—The concept of Naad and Bindu has been elaborately explained earlier Cantos of this Upanishad. It is only when the Chitta (the subtler aspect of the mind; the sub-conscious) is totally focused on meditation and contemplation that one is able to hear the Naad reverberating in his Naadis and the head where the brain is located. The Bindu in this context would refer to the area of the brain which perceives the sound and interprets it as an intelligent signal—i.e. the so-called ‘point source’ where the sound waves of the cosmic Naad are monitored and deciphered in the brain as meaningful signals. This location is the tri-junction of the two eyebrows and the root of the nose, the approximate area of the brain called the cerebrum. This area is also the site responsible for wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and knowledge. The entire process of focusing the Chitta on a Bindu to hear the Naad requires intense concentration and practice. That is why when we concentrate our attention on some subject requiring intense concentration of the mind, when we are pensive and submerged in some deep thoughts, our forehead creases and furrows involuntarily in order to focus on the subject at hand.]

73. In fact, it is the Mana (mind) that is the Bindu or point source of the entire creation—its origin, its sustenance and its development. This Bindu originates from the Mana just like the milk has its origin in the cow. [In other words, this world exists because the mind

has wanted it to come into existence and then it is the mind that keeps it there because it wants it to be there. The center in the brain that control its power to imagine is the metaphoric 'Bindu' or point from where the entire world is unfolded in the way of an imagination. Once this chain is set in motion, it is difficult to control or role it back much like the milk produced in the body of the cow. Once this milk is generated and begins to ooze out from the cow's udder, it has to be taken out and cannot be stopped midway. Any action to the contrary would cause unnecessary inconvenience to the animal and might be very injurious to the latter's health. That is why great emphasis is laid in the Upanishads on the point that if one wishes to get rid of the world and its associated problems, the only way to do so is to control the mind.] (73).

74. When the ascetic is fully acquainted with the secret of the six symbolic energy centers in the body, called the 'Chakras'¹, and has unfolded their energy, he is then empowered by this energy to enter the seventh Chakra². This seventh Chakra is marked by extreme happiness and bliss; it is the fount of ecstasy, felicity and beatitude. During this process, the Pran Vayus, the vital winds of the body, are all controlled and made to move in a harmonious manner. [The Yoga Upanishads describe in detail how the practitioner of Yoga can collect all his vital winds and channel their flow through the various Chakras after passing through the Kundalini and then rising up through the Sushumna Naadi to go straight up to the top of the head. Once the vital winds reach the head, they create vibrations that have a massaging effect on the nerves of the brain that calms down the nerves and give the practitioner an unmatched and indescribable sensation of bliss, contentedness and spiritual ecstasy.] (74).

[Note—¹The *six Chakras* are the following—(1) The 'Mooladhar Chakra', (2) The 'Swadhisthan Chakra', (3) The 'Manipur Chakra', (4) The 'Anahat Chakra', (5) The 'Vishuddha Chakra/Kanth Chakra' and (6) The 'Agya Chakra or Bhru Chakra'.

²The *seventh Chakra* is called the 'Brahm Rahandra Chakra or Sahasrar Chakra' which is located in the forehead and has the form of a grey cloud or smoke. It is the hair-like spilt in the top of the skull from where the vital wind called 'Pran' makes its exit from the body of a Yogi (ascetic) at the time of his death. Sometimes it is used as a synonym for the 'Vyom Chakra' which is symbolic of the sky and it is shaped like a 10-petal lotus located at the top of the head.]

75. Wise and expert ascetics establish uniformity between the different Vayus (vital winds of the body), the Bindu Chakra (i.e. the Agya Chakra located in the forehead as well as the Sahasrar Chakra located in the top of the head because it is here that the vital winds start swirling like a whirlwind and it is here that the ascetic hears the Naad) and the Chitta (the mind and its subtle faculties of concentration and paying attention)—this helps them to coordinate their individual energy and vitality to obtain the sublime state of ecstasy and bliss which is tantamount to obtaining the elixir of life called Amrit. This is achieved during the state of Samadhi (which is stage in the practice of Yoga when the practitioner is completely lost in meditation and totally oblivious to any kind of external disturbances arising out of the world and the body)¹ (75).

[Note—¹It is during Samadhi that one is able to create favourable circumstances for the unification of all the vital winds present in the body, concentrate them in one place in the head, and then make them whirl around in circles to generate the vibration that lead to ecstasy and bliss, or the hearing of the Naad. Naturally, the mind and its ability to focus attention on any task at hand are very important components in this process—thereby

bringing into focus the role and importance of the Chitta. Thus in Samadhi, the practitioner obtains the exalted state of consciousness when he is virtually submerged in an ocean of beatitude and ecstasy from which he derives immense sense of happiness and joy so much so that he would not like to move away from it and continue to drink this divine and eclectic nectar on a perpetual basis. He hears the Naad and its cosmic vibrations completely drown his other senses so much that he loses awareness of the external world as well as the body itself because their presence is felt or known only as long as the nerves carry relevant information to the brain and the latter is free to interpret this incoming information. With these two units numbed by the cosmic vibrations, the entire circuitry sort of short-circuits and the senses become practically numbed out of existence. The only thing that is heard and felt is the Naad and its attendant sensation of blissful feeling.]

76. The fire is always present inherently in the firewood, but it is kindled or made to make its physical presence visible only when this wood is vigorously rubbed as done in the case of fire sacrifices when an Arani¹ is used to light the fire.

Similarly, the light of Gyan, i.e. the illumination provided by enlightenment and wisdom is only brought to the fore by constant and diligent practice. It needs steadiness of purpose and unwavering commitment on the part of the spiritual aspirant to kindle this light of wisdom and enlightenment (that would help him to see who he really is—i.e. to become ‘self-realised’ and then progress further to realise that this ‘self’ is the non-dual and conscious Atma which is the microcosmic image of the supreme transcendental cosmic Atma of the entire creation at the macrocosmic level).

In other words, though each individual possesses the light of wisdom and intelligence that is inherently and naturally present in him for the simple reason that all have a brain and all have the same consciousness flowing in their bodies, but if this divine faculty is not properly polished, trained and harnessed then it would remain dormant and untapped like the fire in the firewood (76).

[Note—¹The fire of the sacrificial pit is to be self produced. This is done by vigorously rubbing two pieces of wood called the Arani. The *Arani* consists of two pieces of wood used to self-produce the fire during fire sacrifices by vigorously rubbing them against one another. The lower piece is rectangular in shape with a hole or indentation in the middle; it is made of a softer form of wood, usually of the Ashvattha tree (*Ficus religiosa*). It is called the lower Arani or the ‘Adharaa-rani’ and is likened to the female uterus. The upper piece of wood is in the form of a churning or rubbing rod made of hard wood, usually Shami tree (*Acacia suma*), and it is called ‘Uttaraa-rani’. It is equivalent to the male phallus. The upper piece is inserted in the hole of the lower piece and vigorously turned with the help of a long string or cord. This rubbing generates heat and results in the creation of fire at the point of friction. This fire is the offspring of this union of the cosmic male and female.]

77. The oil lamp lighted inside a pitcher cannot spread its light outside of it (because it is enclosed by the body of the pitcher). When the pitcher is broken it is only then that this light can spread and cover the wider realm (77).

78. The body of the spiritual aspirant is like this metaphoric pitcher, and the Jiva (the living being) himself is like the oil lamp. [Or, in other words, the pure consciousness called the Atma which is the true identity of the Jiva, cannot show its light of wisdom,

erudition and enlightenment under ordinary circumstances because of the fact that it is covered by the veil represented by the gross body in which it has to live much like the oil lamp put inside the pitcher].

Under the expert guidance of a Guru (moral preceptor and spiritual guide and teacher) when the outer covering of the body is removed, i.e. when one is able to do away with one's attachments with the gross body and be enamoured by its various charms and attractions on the wise advice of his Guru, he would then be able to see the light hidden inside his own bosom in the form of 'consciousness'. This awareness and understanding is like achieving the most exalted state of self-realisation which is synonymous with the state of Brahm-realisation (because the conscious Atma and Brahm are one and the same entity, albeit their planes of existence are different, for the former is at the micro level of existence while the latter is at the macro level of existence) (78).

[Note—The creature has been using the body as the medium through which he has been enjoying the sensual pleasures and various comforts of this material world. So when he is able to symbolically get rid of the body by becoming indifferent to it and its enticements of offering various charms and comforts, it would be symbolically like the breaking of the pitcher.

That is, when the aspirant is able to understand, under the wise advice given by his Guru, that it was the body which had been misleading him to believe that the world outside was the real thing for him—because of the simple reason that it was through the medium of the body that he could interact with the external world and become aware of its attractions and enticements—though he had been told by the scriptures that this world is false and an imagination of the mind, he had found it very difficult to be convinced by this proposition of the falsehood of the world because the body had made him believe otherwise. Now when the body has been removed from the scene by diligent practice and wisdom ignited by the expert advice of the Guru, it is natural that all illusions and delusions pertaining to the world that arise out of the awareness of the body are eliminated for good. When this happens, the aspirant is able to witness another world of the self-illuminated and radiant Atma which radiates an eternal light of enlightenment and wisdom. This world of the lighted consciousness is eternal and blissful as compared to the world to which the gross body related to earlier, i.e. the world of sense organs and their objects which are perishable and transient as well as the cause of all sorts of grief and sorrows which can never give peace and happiness to anyone.

Once this state of eclectic understanding is achieved, the light of Brahm realisation and self realisation that accompany such wisdom comes to the fore. This 'light' had been hitherto lying hidden from view. When the creature loses all interest in the attractions of the body, he would no longer be attached to and attracted by the outside material world because the latter is felt and enjoyed by the medium of the body.

When this happens, the mind would be free to concentrate its attention on more sublime and subtler things other than the gross physical world, i.e. it would be free from being distracted by the numerous inputs of the external world received through the organs of the body. The spiritual aspirant can now become free from the numerous encumbrances of the gross body such as having various Vasanas and Vrittis (inherent worldly passions and desires as well as habits and temperaments), and instead use all his strength and stamina to unfold the light of the pure conscious Atma present inside his own self. This wisdom and enlightenment leads him on the eclectic path of Brahm realisation which in turn would provide him with a sense of eternal peace and beatitude.]

79. The Guru is like the helmsman who holds the oar of a boat (i.e. he is like the expert boatman who steers the boat and knows how to go about his job with accurate precision), while the wise words or the advice that he gives are like the strong boat itself. The desire to cross this mundane and material world of delusions and artificiality, and find eternal liberation and deliverance from its trap for all times to come, is the 'Vasana Shakti', or the 'power of desire' that drives one to embark upon this great journey to cross this ocean-like world and reach its other shore (i.e. to obtain emancipation and salvation for the soul) by using this boat and following the instructions of the Guru (who is an expert in this field) (79).

This is what this Yogshikha Upanishad preaches. This is its truthful teaching. Amen!

Thus ends Canto 6

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(IV—I) Yog Tattva Upanishad

The name of this Upanishad itself indicates what it is about. The word has two components—Yog and Tattva. 'Yog' means meditation as a means of bringing about a union between the soul of the individual and the Soul of the creation, to establish harmony between two entities that have been artificially separated though they are inherently the same. Tattva means the essence and principle of anything. Hence, the combined meaning is clear—the text strives to establish a unity between two inherently divine entities which are essentially and by principal one and the same but been inadvertently and erroneously separated from one another. They yearn to be re-united into their original non-dual form as the Principal entity that is the Absolute Truth of creation.

This is a revealed Upanishad as it was taught or preached by Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation, when Brahma, the creator of the visible creation, approached the former to advise a method by which the creatures of this vast colourful creation that was being unfolded by him could free themselves from the clutches of ignorance about the reality of existence and find the correct path that can ensure their liberation and deliverance. So Vishnu taught Brahma about the essential features of Yoga, its benefits and its different aspects. Regular practice of Yoga enables the practitioner to be able to break free from the unending cycle of miseries and transmigration, and instead find liberation and deliverance from it.

It describes the concept of Kaivalya (the 'only one') and stresses that Yoga is the best path leading to it. In the realm of Yoga, it deals with five types, i.e. Mantra Yoga, Laya Yoga, Hath Yoga, Raaj Yoga and Purna Mano Yoga, and narrates their various aspects. It goes on to outline the daily norms and codes of conduct to be followed by an ascetic, and the subtle signs which indicate that he has achieved success in his spiritual pursuit. Such a person acquires mystical powers that are divine and godly. He is able to

witness the light of consciousness lighted in his inner self and find permanent liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death.

It also outlines the symbolic location of the five primary elements, viz. earth, water, fire, air and sky, in the body and their personification in the form of the various Gods or deities that are worshipped and revered in Hinduism.

This Upanishad is very similar to Yogshikha Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. Whereas the teacher in the present case, the Yogtattva is Lord Vishnu, the teacher in the case of Yogshikha is Lord Shiva. Other Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda greatly related to this Upanishad are the Tejobindu, Dhyan Bindu, Brahm Vidya and Varaaha to name a few of them.

1. I shall describe the essential principles and tenets of Yoga with the all round welfare of ascetic and spiritual aspirants in mind so that they can have a guideline to show them the correct path. It is so potent that hearing it, studying it and implementing it (its principles) in one's own life can bless one with the ability to destroy, overcome or neutralise the bad consequences of one's sins and misdeeds (1).

2. Lord Vishnu is known as the primary and most ancient 'Maha-Yogi' (the great patriarch of ascetics who followed the tenets of Yoga diligently himself and is deemed to be the prime and most ancient teacher and exponent of this philosophy).

He is also known as the 'Maha-Bhut' because he is the primary and most ancient cause of all the Bhuts, i.e. all the primary elements (earth, water, fire, air and sky) that exist in this creation and from which the rest of the creation has come into being (or moulded from); he is the greatest of all the Bhuts; he is the progenitor of the Bhuts.

He is also known as 'Maha-Tapa', i.e. the one who does severe penances for the welfare of others and to keep himself pure by observing the strictest and harshest laws of austerity, probity, propriety nobility, auspiciousness and righteousness which entail a lot of sufferance in their wake.

In the path of essential Truth and Reality, in the path that is true and holy, the path that is free from all deceit and delusions, he is like a lighted lamp. [In other words, he is like a light that shows the correct spiritual path to all the followers just as a lamp shows the path to others by its light by removing the darkness.] (2).

[Note—Refer verse no. 120 in this context.]

3. The old patriarch and the creator of this visible creation, Lord Brahma, went to Lord Vishnu, the lord of the entire creation (visible and non-visible), bowed his head reverentially before him and said, 'Oh Lord of the entire world! Please preach to me all aspects of Yoga, complete with its eight branches called 'Ashtaanga Yoga'' (3).

4. Hearing this, Lord Hrishikesh (Vishnu) replied to him, 'Alright. I shall narrate that 'Tattva' (principle, essential, fundamental and basic knowledge) that you seek to know. Listen attentively. All the creatures are bound or trapped in the web or net weaved by Maya¹ (delusions) out of the two opposing threads called Sukha or comforts and happiness, and Dukha or a motley collection of assorted sorrows and miseries that together cast a magical spell of delusions upon the creature and keep him trapped (4).

[Note—¹The concept of Maya has been explained in detail in a note appended to Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition which is included in this book, Section (II). Refer also to Krishna Yajur Veda's Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 87, and Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 33.]

5. This path or way is the only one which can take the creature across the hurdle of death and lead it to liberation and deliverance from the web of Sukha and Dukha created by Maya that had shackled the creature in its iron-like grip, providing him freedom from the endless cycle of birth and death along with its attendant agonies such as old age and diseases (5).

6. The supreme stature that a creature can attain, the best destiny for the creature that is one of its own kind, is not obtainable easily by following any other path or method other than the one described here. Even wise and erudite ones who try to follow so many different paths shown by so many different scriptures become perplexed and confused. Their intellect gets bogged down in this quagmire from which they find hard to extricate themselves (6).

7. That supreme stature and spiritual achievement is so enigmatic and esoteric that even the Gods fail to fully grasp it and describe it, or even mention anything about it in a cogent manner. Say then, how is it possible for the scriptures to do so? How is it possible for them (the scriptures) to definitely and with certainty describe the subtle and sublime Atma which is immanent, self-illuminated, quintessential and enlightened cosmic Consciousness when even the divine Gods—who are much senior to ordinary mortals, who have attained their Godly stature because they had risen above the mundane and acquired certain divine qualities not available to others, and therefore have become more enlightened about this Atma that is quintessentially present everywhere—cannot do so. These Gods have become Godly in the first place because they had realised the presence and glory of this eclectic divine entity known as the Atma, but still they are unable to tell anything about it. (7).

8. This Atma is without any Kalaas (portions and aspects, because it is one single immutable non-dual whole). It is without any worldly faults, filths, taints and blemishes. It is calm, tranquil and serene. It is beyond everything and all transcends all definitions. It is free from all physical and moral ailments that afflict the creatures (because such things happen to someone who has a physical body and who is involved in the affairs of the world, but the Atma is an ethereal spirit, unattached and uninvolved).

But the irony is that such an immaculate and pristine pure entity, i.e. the Atma, gets soaked and drenched in the after effects of deeds that are categorised as either good (auspicious, righteous, noble, proper and correct) or bad (the opposite of what is good) when it assumes the role of a Jiva (living being)¹ (8).

[Note--¹This is because the Atma assumes an identity as a 'Jiva', i.e. a living being that has a gross body, and is therefore subject to all the problems associated with the latter and conditioned by all the characteristic qualities of it. The Atma now loses its independence and its primary ethereal and spirit form; it becomes limited to the body, conditioned by it and influenced by it. This Atma-with-a-body, the Jiva-Atma, receives information from the outside world through the medium of the gross body and its organs,

and acts according to it, thereby becoming conditioned, influenced and biased. It would lose its pristine and independent nature of 'self thought' and 'self action'. Since it has to live in this world which is deed-oriented, it cannot remain idle and must do this or that. Each deed done would leave a trail of consequences, either good or bad. This would compel the Atma to suffer the effects of the deeds and get affected just like a passenger of a chariot is tossed about and hurt when the vehicle in which he is traveling is itself rocking and swinging from side to side; the passenger cannot remain immune to the way the chariot moves. See verse nos. 12-13 below.

The virtuous attributes and eclectic characteristics of the pure conscious Atma have been narrated in a number of Upanishads—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda's Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 81-110; Tejo Bindu Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-51, 60-64, Canto 4, verse nos. 2-30, 69-79, Canto 5, verse nos. 1-75, 90-96, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-72. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda's Adhyatma Upanishad; Subalo-panishad, Canto 3, 5, 7 (verse no. 1), and 9 (verse no. 16); Paingalo-panishad, canto 4, verse no.18. (c) Rig Veda's Atma-poojo-panishad. (d) Atharva Veda's Atmo-panishad.]

9. Now the natural question arises as to why and how that Atma—which is said to be transcendental, beyond all concepts and notions, eternal and infinite, omnipresent and all-pervading, an embodiment of Gyan (enlightenment, wisdom, erudition and sagacity), and without any tinge of Maya (delusions and misconceptions caused by ignorance and deceptions)—becomes a Jiva (a living being or creature having a gross body and subject to all the taints and shortcomings associated with this gross body and the world in which it lives)? (9).

10. [This verse briefly summarises the first moments of creation, and is akin to all the Upanishads that deal with the genesis of creation.]

In the beginning, that principle primary and primordial 'essence' (Tattva) was absolutely placid and calm¹.

Then there were minute and almost imperceptible ripples in it just like the ones in water, indicating some subtle and secret activity². This caused the element of Ahankar³ (the sense of pride and ego) to emerge in it.

This activity resulted in the formation of the primary cosmic egg which had certain Gunas⁴ (inherent qualities, attributes, virtues and characteristics) that would determine the specific nature, temperament and personality traits of the creature that would finally emerge from this egg when it hatched. [These Gunas were like the chemical ingredients in any fluid that determine its fundamental qualities and characteristics. They would determine the underlying subtle and basic nature, the basic temperament and character traits of the offspring, i.e. the creature, which would emerge when the egg hatched finally upon maturity.]

Besides the above, the yolk of the egg had as its basic constituent ingredients the five primary elements called 'Panch Maha Bhuts' (which are sky, air, fire, water and earth). These elements determined the basic texture of this yolk that would determine the form which the offspring (creature) would get when the egg finally hatched⁵ (10).

[Note--¹There is a play on the word *Tattva* here. We speak of a flower's *Tattva*, i.e. the volatile liquid extracted from the flowers and used as various scents and perfumes. It is called the 'essence' of the flower. Even the nectar is called 'essence' or *Tattva* of the flower. The oil extracted from seeds and herbs are also called their *Tattva* or essential extracts. The common factor in all these is the 'liquid or fluid' nature of the *Tattva*. It is

this reason why life is said to have emerged in water, a fluid and elixir of life and vitality, the 'essence' or Tattva that sustains and protects life. The primary essence of creation was not some liquid as we understand the term; it was 'ethereal', more like the air or wind element, resembling more closely to the something that fills the outer space above the surface of the earth. It must be understood that though 'air' does not exist outside the atmosphere of the earth, it is not an absolute vacuum, for there is something that lies between any two celestial bodies or planets, separating them and preventing them from colliding with each other. All celestial bodies are dipped in this cosmic liquid which is like a 'volatile essence' drawn from flowers. It is 'volatile' because it is never the same, and that is why we say that the creation is continuously and perpetually changing and evolving. Had it not been so, had that Tattva been a solid, everything in creation would have been cast in one fixed mould for eternity.

²According to the philosophy of *Tantra Shastra* dedicated to the worship of divinity in the form of Shiva and Shakti, the process of creation took the following initial steps. Before anything came into being, Brahm, the supreme consciousness and the ultimate truth of creation, known as Shiva, was established in his own radiant effulgence or self-illumination symbolising his splendorous glory, majesty and divinity. Hence he was called 'Prakash', literally meaning light. When he decided to deliberate and actually started the process of deliberation in order to start the process of creation, there was a subtle 'spandan' or a slight throb or imperceptible movement which transformed into a vibration. The waves generated by this initial vibration developed in the cosmic ether and gradually coalesced with each other to give rise to higher waves of higher amplitudes. This produced the cosmic sound called the Naad. Since the creation was conceived in the bowl of the cosmic ether, the energy of the initial sound was focused at a central point, called the focal point or the dot or 'Bindu'. This Bindu contained the combined powers of both the male Shiva and the female Shakti like a dicotyledonous seed which produced the two separate entities called Shiva and Shakti. The union of these two resulted in the unfolding of the rest of the creation. Thus it will be observed that whatever exists in this creation can be traced back to this primeval Naad. Hence, the latter is called 'Shabda Brahm', or the Brahm as sound. Therefore it is very natural to assume that all Mantras dedicated to any divine entity and consisting of the sound element (because Mantra consist of letters and words, and are chanted or repeated to make them effective) has its origin in this Shabda Brahm and gets its powers and energy from this Shabda Brahm. In other words, the Mantra contains in itself the essential meaning, form and spirit of the deity whose Mantra it is and which is being worshipped and invoked. Constant repetition of the Mantra generates so much energy in due course of time that the deity being worshipped is revealed. This is because the sound has great powers and energy as is evident when reverberation of sound waves and the resonance created by them are so powerful and forceful that they can shatter sheet glass in windows when an explosion occurs near a building.

³This is because that Tattva thought to itself 'well, I have life in me; I can show activity; I can move; I am not dead'. This factor of 'I' was the root of Ahankar. That is why even today, the word 'I' is associated with ego, pride, vanity, arrogance and haughtiness, collectively called Ahankar.

⁴The three characteristic qualities inherently present in the creature, in different ratios, are the three thought textures which bombard the mind. These three thought textures are manifestations of the 'Vrittis and Vasanas' (inherent tendencies or desires) of the creature which mire its pure conscious Atma or soul as a covering or veil. These three basic qualities or *Gunās* which are inherent in all the living beings determine their nature, habits, temperaments and inclinations which in turn decide the behaviour, personality and outlook of each individual in this world.

(a) *Sata Guna* or quality is the best quality present in a creature and it is marked by a predominance of auspiciousness, righteousness, virtuousness and noble qualities. It is marked by such high standards of ethical existence that have, as their characteristic features, such qualities as coolness of head, peace, contentedness, humility, devotion, wisdom, mercy, compassion, creativity, selflessness, service, righteousness, virtuousness, holiness and nobility of thought and action etc. As is evident, these qualities are the best qualities that one can have in him; they have a spiritual dimension to them; they are spiritually uplifting and give a divine halo to those who practice them. This quality creates an inherent affinity in a creature towards things in life which are of high moral value and uplifting for the soul rather than things which are demoting and denigrating for the spirit.

The *Sata Guna* or quality is the veil covering the soul like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the *Satwic* desires; its removal requires the least effort. It is the foremost and the best amongst the three characteristics of a creature such as good and positive virtuous such as righteousness, creativity, noble deeds and thoughts, the positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc.

(b) *Raja Guna* is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, desires, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, desire to sustain etc. All these pertain to this materialistic world, and they create an inherent affinity in a creature towards the material world of sense objects and their enjoyments rather than the world of spiritualism. In other words, those creatures who have this quality as a dominant trait are more inclined towards the world as compared to those creatures who have the *Sata* quality in a greater density. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the *Satwic* qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The *Rajasic* quality or *Guna* can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with *Satwic* quality. *Rajasic* tendencies are the second best quality which produces worldly desires, ambitions, passions, selfishness, various obsessions, desire to sustain and expand etc.

(c) *Tama Guna* is the third quality which is the meanest and basest of the three types of qualities in a creature. It is marked by evilness, perversions and sinfulness. It is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, leading him to such negative traits as sins, vices, perversions, greed, avarice, haughtiness, pride, lust, attachments, yearnings, intoxication, wild behaviour, promiscuity, evils, utter disregard for anything which is righteous, ethical and noble etc. This quality creates an inherent affinity in a creature towards things which are very mean and lowly, which are totally sensual and pertain to the immediate gratification of the sense urges without any thought to what would be their consequences in the long run. In brief, behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraving for the creature, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness of demeanors. It is the lowest and meanest of the three qualities leading to a person's downfall, ignominy and ruin.

The *Tamsic* quality or *Guna* covering the soul is like a foetus in the womb covered by the embryonic membrane—they cannot be removed easily and require diligence, effort, dedicated and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, the worst type to possess, and is marked by such negative traits as sin, evil, perversions, immorality, vices, misdemeanors, anger, inertia, delusions, deception, gloom, ignorance et al.

Since each individual is like an independent piece of mosaic that completes the entire picture in conjunction with other such pieces, this individual creature's nature and character helps to determine the overall shape of the creation. These Gunas keep the creation in a state of constant change, because numerous creatures die every moment and new ones are born. The Supreme Being has to be constantly on the alert because of this flux.

The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular 'nature' of an individual giving him his individuality and his special characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body—e.g. two men—might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, behaviour, thinking, outlook, action and deeds, wisdom and way of living. This is what is meant when it said that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual, countable specific number that there are actually and physically 84 Lakh types of bodies of living beings; it only symbolically refers to the huge possibilities that are possible with these three 'Gunas' and their different combinations that can imaginably produce a myriad variety of creation that can be created with these three basic qualities and their various sub classes of qualities.

The proportion of the three Gunas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclination of the creatures. For example, a person with a greater proportion of 'Satvic' (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of 'Rajasic' or 'Tamasic' qualities. So we can say that sages, seers, prophets, scholars and generally enlightened persons have a high degree of 'Satvic' qualities in them; kings and householders who live a noble life are example of those with higher amount of 'Rajasic' quality in them; while sinners, killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats etc. are those people with higher 'Tamasic' quality in them. These Gunas have direct bearing on the personality of a man.

To understand how the three Gunas affect the Atma, let's take two examples—that of a hot piece of iron glowing red with heat, and the potter moulding various pots from the same clod of earth.

The supreme pure conscious cosmic Atma subjects the Bhoot Atma of the individual creature to the 'radiation' of these 'Gunas'. These 'Gunas' are the three basic qualities present in all the creatures in different permutations and combinations. These 'Gunas' effect the 'Bhoot Atma' differently based on a number of factors—such as for example, the present status of the 'Bhoot Atma' vis-à-vis its past deeds, their cumulative affects, the caliber of its mind and intellect, the position it occupies in the ladder of spiritual evolution, its willingness to change or subject itself to the effects of such radiation etc.

The concept can be understood differently also. A piece of iron, when heated, shows the heat as a 'red hot glow' which fully pervades the iron piece and becomes an integral part of it. The whole piece appears to be one whole mass of something which is red, hot and glowing. When beaten by a hammer, the iron piece bends and can be shaped into any shape. Each new shape, when heated, will show the same glow of red hot fire inside it. Similarly, the Atma provides consciousness to the creature, making it active and lively, subject to receptions of stimuli in the form of various perceptions originating in the external world and received through the organs of perception present in the gross body. The 'heated' body (i.e. the Bhoot Atma made active by the Atma) now becomes susceptible to change (from the impact of the three Gunas) much like the heated piece of iron being hammered by the hammer. The 'hammering' by the three 'Gunas' (the inherent qualities present in every creature) help to cast the individual creature into various moulds or shapes having different characteristics. Even as cold iron is not easily malleable, the creature without the infusion of life injected into it by the Atma is as good

as dead and is the least malleable. Here, the allegory is simple —the creature is the iron, the glowing consciousness is the fire, the impinging ‘Gunas’ is the blow of the hammer, and the Atma is the iron smith.

The wheel of the potter moulds the clay into various shapes, but the driving force of the wheel is the potter. Similarly, the three ‘Gunas’ mould the characteristic of the creature, but the Atma is the authority, the potter in this allegory, who drives the three ‘Gunas’. Just as the potter is not the wheel, the Atma is not affected by the three ‘Gunas’, it is just an instrument, an implement to shape the character of the creature. Again, even as a wheel is needed by a potter to give shape to a shapeless clod of clay, the Atma needs the three Gunas to mould the characters of the creatures that constitute this creation.

And important point to note here is that ‘Ahankar’ (ego, false pride, arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy and the sense of ‘I’) is the root cause of demoting even the most exalted of souls to an existence equivalent to that of an animal. This is stressed in Jabalu-panishad of Sam Veda tradition which stresses that ‘Isha’ or the supreme Lord of creation had to become a ‘Pashupati’, Lord of animals, just because Ahankar cast its dark shadow on him. An exalted soul too becomes demoted as an animal if he has Ahankar in him.

The concept that ‘I’ is the body and not the ‘pure conscious soul’ leads to ignorance-based ego (Ahanakar). The constant concept of I vis-à-vis the body and this world leads to the sense of possessiveness in the creature. ‘Pure consciousness’ mired by ego becomes ‘a conditioned consciousness’ and fails to remain pure. This is why ego (Ahankar) has been likened to a minister of the king. It directs and regulates the actions of the consciousness which, under its influence, loses its independence. This ‘conditioned consciousness’—working through the mind-intellect-ego combine is called, inter-alia, ‘Chitta’. The word also means memory. Hence this memory acts as a referral library for the intellect. The latter falls back on it and rely on it whenever it is in doubt. The quality of books in the library guides the student; similarly, the quality of inherent tendencies stored in the library of Chitta directly affects the inputs of the intellect, and through it, the mind and successively down the hierarchy to the body and its organs of perception and action.

Although the soul has nothing to do with this command chain, but for all practical purposes the Atma/soul is deemed responsible for it because of its sovereign nature. So, the sincere seeker/aspirant should delineate this conscious from the rest of the chain and break the nexus between them so as to allow the glory of the pure consciousness of the soul to shine through like the splendorous sun breaking through from behind a curtain of clouds. It is like removing the various veils or covers from around the candle so that its light shines through the darkness of the room and illuminates all the corners of it.

How the three Gunas were used by Brahm to create this world has been beautifully described in Paingalo-panishad, 1/7 and 2/3. Canto 2, verse no. 3 describes how Sata and Raja were used, while Canto 1, verse no. 7 narrates the use of Tama. The concept of Gunas affecting the Atma has been elaborately dealt with in various Upanishads, for example the Maitrayanyu Upanishad, 1/11, 2/5, 3/5, etc. of the Sam Veda tradition.

Besides the three primary Gunas, we have six other Gunas as follows—(i) Sham (शम—having self restraint and control; having peace, tranquility, serenity and quietness; being able to suppress desires, yearnings and natural instincts and impulses); Dam (दम —tolerance, forbearance, fortitude); (iii) Upriti (उप्रति—renunciation, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement); (iv) Titksha (तिक्शा —endurance, patience, fortitude, sufferance, equanimity); (v) Samadhan (समाधान —solution, answer, lack of confusion or doubts, clarity of thoughts and conception); and (vi) Shraddha (श्रद्धा —having faith, belief, conviction, reverence and devotion).

⁵This is like the case of a building where its physical structure is determined by the physical grosser dimension of the construction materials used in its construction, such as bricks, steel, cement, sand, mortar, wood, iron, the paint used to colour it etc. Besides this, there is a subtle dimension of construction that depends upon the quality and not the quantity of these materials. Together they determine not only the exterior façade, the physical shape and presentation of this building but its inherent strength and quality. Then other factors come into play, such as the intention for which it was made and how actually it is being used, how it is looked after, who lives in it, how does it effect the surrounding landscape, what general ambience it has, whether it is foreboding and awe-inspiring or is welcoming and inviting, whether it is airy, lighted and comfortable or not, and such other small and big things. These are its hidden subtler qualities.

Likewise, the basic ingredients used at the time of conception of the creature in the cosmic egg, i.e. the ratio of the basic Gunas and the proportion of different elements would determine how each creature would become a unique sample even as no two buildings can ever be exactly the same in the true sense, for subtle variations are sure to creep in because of the nature of its independent construction work. That is also the reason why no two creatures are alike.]

11. That inherently pure, uncorrupted, supreme and transcendental Atma known as Parmatma, when it allowed itself to be submerged in or affected by such worldly notions as having Sukha and Dukha (i.e. when the Atma began to feel happy and sorrowful as a result of it erroneously identifying itself with the gross body and the material world which tossed it between the emotions of having elation and joy on the one hand, and threw it into the pit of distress and dismay, inflicting untold miseries to it on the other hand) it began to be called a Jiva Atma. This is how the Parmatma, the Supreme Being, came to be known as the Jiva, the living being. [The word 'Jiva' literally means something that is alive, that lives, whereas Parmatma means the supreme Atma, the supreme consciousness. The former word in practice refers to all the living beings in this creation, including plants and animals, while the latter word refers to the Lord of creation, the God of all the gods.] (11).

[Note—The genesis of creation described here in very brief is elaborately explained elsewhere in the Upanishads, such as in the following ones--(a) Rig Veda tradition—Aiteriyo-panishad; Mudgalo-pansishad, Canto 2-4; (b) Sam Veda tradition—Chandogyo-pansishad, Canto 3, Section 19; Canto 4, Section 17, verse nos. 1-3; Canto 6, Section 2-10; (c) Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—Trishikhi Brahmin, Canto 1; Painglo-pansishad, in its Canto 1 and Canto 2, verse no. 1-10; Subalo-pansishad, Canto 1-2; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 1, Brahmin 1-2, 4-5; Canto 6, Brahmin 4; (d) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Shwetashwetar Upanishad, Canto 4; Taittiriyo-pansishad, Valli (Canto) 2, Anuvak (sub-canto) 2 and 6.]

12-13. [These verses describe how and why the otherwise immaculate and non-dual single entity known as the Atma begins to appear to have numerous forms and exhibit as many varied characteristic traits as there are creatures of various genres and personalities, each so different from the other that no two are alike. Refer to Garbha Upanishad, para 3 which describes sixteen faults that surround the Atma; to Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 93/1-93/15 which uses the beautiful analogy of the Atma enclosed in a symbolic Lotus with tinted petals in the subtle heart of the aspirant and from where it looks at the world through these tinted petals, thereby not only distorting its view of the world but

also allowing itself to be 'coloured'—or getting corrupted, tainted and influenced by the myriad impure qualities that are the general characteristics of this world.]

Some of the numerous faults, weaknesses, imperfections, blemishes or shortcomings that affect the character of a Jiva (living being, the creature), causing it to be blighted and preventing his pure and uncorrupt self, the Atma, from retaining its primarily untainted, pristine pure and immaculate character, nature and form which is one and non-dual, called the 'Kaivalya' state of its existence, are the following—Kaam (worldly desires, passions and lust), Krodh (anger, indignation, spite and wrath), Bhaya (fear and consternation), Moha (attractions, attachments, delusions, infatuations, longing), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness and intoxication), Raja (the second of the three qualities creating worldly tendencies and desires related to this world), Janma-Mritu (the cycle of birth and death and its attendant horrors and agonies), Kripantaa (being stingy and miserly, specially in the field of religious duties such as giving alms and making charities, or supporting such activities; the word would cover miserliness of thoughts in the sense that one does not give the correct knowledge to others out of jealousy), Shok (sorrows, grief and agonies), Tandra (being sleepy, indolent, lethargic, lazy, careless and showing lack of energy and alertness), Kshudha (hunger, both physical such as for food and the insatiable desire for sensual gratification, as well as emotional such as the insatiable longing for worldly things), Trisha (desires, wishes and yearnings pertaining to the world) [12], Trishnaa (thirst, ambition, avarice and greed; the word is usually used in the negative sense; it pertains to a man's insatiable desire and greed for worldly things), Lajjaa (shame, dishonour, ignominy), the constant fear of Dukha and its attendant Vishaad (i.e. being constantly tormented by the fear of sufferance from sorrows and grief of all kinds and the attendant agonies and miseries, distresses and a sense of despair and hopelessness and haplessness), Harsha (to feel elated and happy, to be glad and joyous, to feel cheerful and exhilarated by certain situations which seem to be in favour, such as on receiving some good news), etc.

It is only when the creature is freed from the tainting effects of all these faults, blemishes, imperfections and shortcomings that the Atma can realise its one and non-dual pure conscious form, the state of existence called 'Kaivalya'¹ (12-13).

[Note--¹These shortcomings, blemishes or defects cast a shadow on the character of the Jiva, causing a blight on his character and inherently pure form, and makes it appear that his Atma, which is his true identity, has these respective shortcomings or defects or imperfections in it. In other words, the immaculate Atma appears to be blighted and tainted. This is because the Atma of the Jiva allows itself to be affected by any or all of these faults and imperfections, forgetting that this is not its true nature but an illusionary scenario created by ignorance of the truth of its primary nature, which is leading it to delusions and its attendant problems. Each fault or imperfection or defect or shortcoming enumerated in these two verses, in association with others and acting in coordination with them in various permutations and combinations create an infinite array and variety of traits of character, temperaments, habits, personalities, attributes, virtues and qualities in all the creatures. The resultant effect is that there is no similarity between any two of them. Thus, the Atma, which is one and the same in all the creatures, appears to be of as many varieties as there are number of creatures. It assumes a dual and varied form; it becomes multifarious and diverse; it loses its non-dual, indivisible and immutable nature. In other words, it has become tainted and full of faults associated with the worldly creature; it has lost its pristine purity and singleness.]

The 'perfect' Atma has thus become 'imperfect'; the 'untainted' Atma has been 'tainted'.

Some of the Upanishads that describe these faults or imperfections that afflict the Atma are Mudgal, Canto 4, verse nos. 4, 6 of Rig Veda; Varaaha, Canto 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda; Mandal Brahmin, Brahmin 1, Section 2, verse no. 1 of Shukla Yajur Veda.]

14. [The following verses describe the ways to overcome the different faults and shortcomings enumerated above.]

Now I shall narrate to you the ways by which one can overcome the negative effects of the various faults, shortcomings, impurities and imperfections that taint the Atma. Say, how can Gyan (knowledge and wisdom) devoid of Yoga (meditation and coordination of the theoretical metaphysical knowledge with its practical spiritual application) ever be useful and successful in providing stable and permanent Moksha (emancipation and salvation, liberation and deliverance) to the creature and his soul from the torments of the trap in which the Atma has been allowed to fall due to ignorance? (14).

[Note—The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 1/2/2 describes the method to overcome these faults of the creature.

Various Upanishads enumerate different Vikaars which are the numerous faults, imperfections, impurities and taints that affect the primary nature and characteristics of the Atma of the creature and impinge upon his behaviour, thinking, temperament etc.

The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 10-11, lists the nineteen Vikaars or faults and shortcomings in the character and mental setup of the creature which prevents the latter from becoming one like the supreme Lord of creation because they act as drags on its spiritual upliftment, pulling the individual's soul towards this mundane world rather than going higher to reach for the sky of spiritual achievement.

The Garbha Upanishad, in its paragraph no. 3 outlines the sixteen faults or flaws that the creature has.

The Shaarirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 17, describes the eight 'Vikaars' or faults, shortcomings, imperfections and blemishes that cast a shadow on the primarily pure and immaculate nature of the Atma at the micro level of creation, as well as on Nature at the macro level of creation.

The Mudgal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 6 of Rig Veda tradition as well as Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse no. 29 list six Vikaars.

And the Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Brahmin 1, section 2, verse no.1 list only five Vikaars.]

15. Similarly, Yoga devoid of Gyan also cannot bestow Moksha. Therefore, those desirous of obtaining Moksha (i.e. those who wish to break free from the cycle of birth and death and its attendant miseries and torments, those who wish to attain emancipation and salvation for their self) should strive to establish a synergy, a harmony between both Gyan and Yoga. That is, they should employ both Gyan and Yoga in a well coordinated and synchronized manner to reach their spiritual goal (15).

16. It is out of Agyan (lack of correct and true knowledge about the reality; ignorance) that the world appears to shackle the creature. And therefore Gyan (true and correct knowledge as well as erudition and wisdom) is the instrument that can free one from this illusion of shackle and the cause of it, the world.

Gyan is the primary instrument needed not only for obtaining liberation and deliverance from the world and its attendant delusory affects, but also to wisely use the techniques of Yoga and put them to good effect in this direction. It was Gyan that had helped the initiation of creation at the very beginning itself (because to start anything as technical and complicated as the unfolding of this vast and mysterious creation with all its fine intricacies, one needs to be not only aware with its detailed process but be an expert and fully conversant in it besides having a practical knowledge of it in order to successfully proceed with it and attain the desired objective). Gyan is the medium by which one can successfully reach one's destination and accomplish one's objectives in life (which in the present case is obtaining Moksha for the soul, attaining spiritual upliftment and enlightenment leading to one's liberation from the fetters of delusions and ignorance that had trapped the soul in their net). It is Gyan that distinguishes the wise and enlightened creature and sets him aside from the rest of the multitudes (16).

17-18. [These verses emphasise what constitutes real and truthful Gyan. Refer Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 14 which also describes what truthful Gyan is and what Agyan is.]

That Gyan (knowledge, erudition, wisdom, enlightenment and awareness) with the help of which one can know about one's truthful 'self' as well as unravel the profound mysteries of existence, is called the real and truthful form of Knowledge.

This Gyan helps one to learn about and experience such unique and eclectic spiritual concepts as Kaivalya¹ (the supreme stature of existence which is the one of its kind and the most exalted state of existence when nothing but the non-dual consciousness is discernible everywhere in the world by the enlightened creature), Param Pada (the supreme stature beyond which there is nothing better; the state of Kaivalya and Param Pada are synonymous and like describing the same thing using different words to highlight its various virtues or characteristics because both describe the same exalted state of non-dual existence of the consciousness or Atma of an enlightened ascetic), Nishkal (one that has no variations and fractions; one that has no Kalaas or separate forms and attributes; one that has no imperfections, faults, blemishes and taints), and Nirmal (pure and pristine, immaculate and uncorrupt, untainted and without any blemishes, clean and free of any impurities). This true form of the Atma, or pure conscious 'self' of the creature, is an embodiment of true and eternal bliss and happiness.

True Gyan entitles one to know the truth and reality of the origin, the present establishment and the conclusion of this world, along with the underlying 'consciousness' and 'life-infusing and life-bearing factors' that brings all this about. [This is because only 'living' entities would take a birth, live a life and die. Since this does happen in this world, therefore there must be some imperceptible and hidden element that brings it all about. It is Gyan of the higher order that would enlighten the wise creature about this esoteric and mysterious element known as the pure conscious Atma that works a hidden dynamic force that turns the wheel of creation just like an ordinary science student needs to acquire expert knowledge and high skills to become a renowned scientist when he grows up and takes control of great projects of immense importance.]

Now onwards, I shall describe about Yoga (17-18).

[Note--¹The word *Kaivalya* means the 'only one' or the non-dual state. It is the supreme stature of existence which is the one of its kind and the most exalted state of existence when nothing but the non-dual consciousness is discernible everywhere in the world by

the enlightened creature. There is non-duality and uniformity everywhere. It is a state of existence which is similar to the state of Samadhi in which the man goes about his daily life doing his chores in a routine way without getting emotionally involved in them and even remaining totally oblivious of what he is doing. He remains totally submerged in his inner self and thoughts. He appears in a virtual trance-like state of existence usually observed in realised ascetics and great philosophers. People regard such men as absent minded, but they are so much absorbed in themselves that they are not concerned with what others think of them. For them, the external world ceases to exist though they physically live in it and interact with it. This Kaivalya form of existence is tantamount to being liberated from the fetters that tie the creature to this body and the world because though he lives in the world he is totally indifferent to it; he is free from all worries, sufferings and sorrows as well as all forms of attachments, entanglements and involvements with the artificial and deluding world that are the usual features of an ordinary worldly man submerged in the world's entrapping charms. This state is comparable to the actual and physical liberation of the soul upon death when it is physically liberated from the bondages of the limitations imposed by the gross body; the only difference being that in the former case the man is alive and enjoys the privilege of having a body that allows the ethereal Atma to enjoy this physical world in a totally dispassionate and detached manner as if it is a neutral observer, while in the latter case he sheds the burden of the body altogether.

The Kaivalya state is considered superior because such a man lives a life of happiness and contentedness; he never suffers from any worldly miseries and worries; he treats the world around him as of no consequence, and remains indifferent to its deluding effects and their entanglements. On the other hand, the ordinary man might find emancipation upon death, but his life is a burden while he is still alive in it. Such a man has not truly understood the teachings of the scriptures; he has not understood the 'spirit' of spiritualism and metaphysics as enumerated by the Upanishads because their main aim is to give peace and tranquility to the tormented soul and help in its liberation from the deluding effects of the body and the world. This concept has been elaborately described in Mukti-panishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. The concept has also been described in other Upanishads, such as Subala-panishad, Canto 13, verse no. 1, and Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, Brahmin 2, section 3, verse no. 1 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, as well as Sarva-sar Upanishad and Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4 of the Krishna Yajur Veda.]

19. From the practical point of view, Yoga has is said to have many branches¹, or it appears to possess many forms. [In other words, though Yoga is one composite science of spiritualism and its main purpose is to bring about a union or harmony between two units of the one single whole by removing imaginary disparities and false dichotomies between them which make them appear to be separate from one another, in order to facilitate understand of its finer nuances and comprehend it in its entirety it is broken up into smaller branches or sections or schools of thoughts and practice, giving the wrong impression that Yoga has so many forms or types. All this creates artificial distinctions between them. Resultantly, their main purpose is lost in futile debates, numerous paths and theories, and almost colliding philosophies.]

Some of the various types or branches of Yoga are the following—Mantra Yoga², Laya Yoga³, Hath Yoga⁴ and Raaj Yoga⁵ (19).

[Note--*Yoga* can be derived from two verbal roots—viz. 'Yuj' meaning to yoke, or to concentrate. Therefore it is that school of philosophy that helps a Jiva, the living being or the individual soul, to attain concentration on the Supreme Being or the cosmic Soul

known as Ishwara. As the denser or more concentrated matter has a greater gravitational pull compared to the lighter and lesser denser one, the concentration results in the supreme Soul pulling the individual soul by the mere force of its attractive force so as to bring about the former plunging headlong into the latter to become one with it. This phenomenon is likened to the individual obtaining the state of Kaivalya or oneness with the Supreme Being so that only the latter is left behind and the former vanishes from existence for all practical purposes.

The word in several senses has been used first used in Rig Veda, 5/81/1.

The Philosophy of Yogdarshan in its basic metaphysical form has the following main elements. It accepts three fundamental realities—Ishwara, Purush and Pradhana or Prakriti. Purush is the individual soul of the living creature. They are of the nature of consciousness and are infinite in number. The existence of Ishwar, the Parmatma or Param Purush, can be known only through the knowledge of the scriptures. He is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent. He is ever free from the shackles of Maya (delusions) and Prakriti (nature). He is the primary and fundamental essence of this existence, the initiator, the progenitor, the creator, the sustainer, the concluder and the final resting place of it. He is designated or known by the ethereal word OM. It is by his will that the Prakriti (Nature) possessing the three basic Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) metamorphoses into the rest of the creation.

The Purush, the individual soul or creature, somehow forgets his real nature and heritage or lineage as pure consciousness, gets absorbed and mired in delusion which accompanies Prakriti as her companion, and thereby gets trapped in the cycle of transmigration consisting birth and death and their attendant miseries and problems.

However when he practices the various steps of Yoga, such as following diligently the eight-fold path shown by Yoga, called the 'Ashtaanga Yoga', he gets above the mundane and breaks thorough the veil of delusions and ignorance cast upon it and realises his true nature and essence. This result in self-realisation, and like the brilliant emerging from behind the bank of dark clouds, the person sees the brilliant Truth shining amidst the dark bleak and mortal world engulfed in a mist of delusions and ignorance. He becomes freed from the ignorance-fuelled delusory world of perishable material things and becomes established in the ultimate 'truth'. Since 'truth' is always one and not two, he is said to have attained the state of 'Kaivalya', the state of oneness that transcends the world of duality and delusions.

²*Mantra Yoga* refers to practicing Yoga through Mantra. It is that Yoga in which constant repetition of Mantras steadies the mind. The Mantra of the chosen deity is used as the standard common denominator and as medium to focus the mind and attention while practicing the eight-fold path of Yoga as prescribed by Patanjali, the greatest exponent of Yoga philosophy. This Yoga is called Astaanga Yoga, the Yoga with eight branches or organs.

According to Vaayaviya Sanhita, which is an important work on Shaivism, there are five kinds of Yoga, and Mantra Yoga is the first amongst them. As stated above, it is that Yoga in which constant repetition of Mantras steadies the mind. When this is associated with Pranayam or breath control, it is called 'Sparsha Yoga'. This develops into a higher state called 'Bhaava Yoga' when the repetition of Mantra stops automatically and involuntarily, leaving only the feeling of tender devotion and spiritual ecstasy in its wake inspite on one living in this world. When one rises higher in this practice, the world completely disappears and there is no feeling whatsoever, a sort of 'neutrality' or 'zero' effect is obtained. This is called 'Abhaava Yoga'. At the last stage of spiritual evolution, the union with Shiva, the ultimate Truth and the embodiment of Yoga, is obtained. This state or stage is called 'Maha Yoga'.

³Technically, the *Laya Yoga* has two meanings. One with a purely metaphysical dimension is the dissolution of the Chitta or mind and its various faculties so much so that the practitioner remembers the supreme Lord even while going about his daily life and its chores simply because his mind is completely dissolved in the remembrance of the Supreme Being and it is the physical gross body that does the various deeds associated with the world, resulting in the person remaining absolutely oblivious of what he has done or whatever is happening around him. This has been asserted in verse no. 23 of this Upanishad.

According to another interpretation based on Patanjali's *Yog sutra*, it is called 'Kundalini Yoga'. This is the physical aspect of Yoga by which various techniques are employed to kindle the latent energy lying dormant in the coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine, called the Kundalini, and spiritual evolvment is attained. This method has been described in detail all major Upanishads detailing the eight steps of physical Yoga.

⁴*Hath Yoga* is the Yoga that teaches how to bring about the union of Pran (the breath, the vital wind that resides in the upper part of the body) and the Apan (the wind that moves down in the body and helps in digestion and excretion, the vital wind that lives in the lower part of the body) by means of strict following of the eight fold path of Yoga such as observance of Yam, Niyam, Asana, Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna, concentration and visualization of the presence of the Supreme Being in the point of the forehead where the root of the nose meets the middle of the eyebrows, and Samadhi. These have been enumerated in verse no. 24-25 below. It teaches the practical aspects of spiritual Yoga.

⁵*Raaj Yoga*—Hath and Raaj Yogas are the two sides of the same coin. Neither is possible without the help of the other. The Raaj Yoga which deals primarily with the control of the mind ultimately leading to the state of Samadhi is the primary form of the two, and Hath Yoga is merely an instrument to aid it. Thus we see that the Yoga propounded by Patanjali is the one which is known as Raaj Yoga because it fulfills the objective and definition of Raaj Yoga.]

20. Yoga has been classified universally as having four main stages or states—Aarambha¹, Ghat², Parichaya³ and Nishpati⁴ (20).

[Note—¹The word *Aarambha* means to begin, the initial phases of Yoga. This refers to the preparatory stage of Yoga.

²The word *Ghat* means a pitcher. Hence this refers to the stage when the vital winds are held inside the body and allowed to mix with each other. See verse nos. 65-66 below.

³The word *Parichaya* means introduction, and it refers to the sudden realisation by the practitioner of Yoga about his own stupendous potentials and his own pure consciousness about which he was hitherto oblivious. The ascetic is literally introduced to his own self. What he had known about himself previously was a distorted version of his true self, but Yoga has introduced him to his real and true conscious and powerful almighty self.

⁴Finally, the word *Nishpati* refers to the completion of Yoga with a definitive degree of certainty. The ascetic is not in any doubt about what he has learnt and experienced. Thus, he would remain steady and unfaltering in his state of self-realisation.]

21-22. The signs of these four stages or phases of Yoga (as described in verse nos. 19-20) are being mentioned briefly now. An aspirant who practices Japa (repetition) of a Mantra¹, complete with all its components such as Maatrikaa² etc., for a continuous period of twelve years is able to acquire knowledge of the various mystical powers and divine potentials known as Siddhis such as Anima³ etc.

But this type of Yoga is done by people of low category whose intellectual development and spiritual aspirations is not of the higher level that is to be expected from true spiritual aspirants. Therefore, they are treated as the lowliest class of spiritual aspirants⁴ (21-22).

[Note—¹*Mantra* is a group of mystical letters or syllables or words or phrases that are used as an aid to concentrate and steady the mind and focus one's energy towards the successful completion of the process of Yoga. It is the sound symbol embodying the form, the power and the consciousness of the supreme Brahm or its various manifestations as the deities worshipped.

²*Maatrikaa* is the part of the Mantra dedicated to Mother Goddess symbolising the esoteric and powerful forces of Nature. It is useful in igniting and activating the latent subtle energy trapped inside the Kundalini, the coiled energy center at the base of the spine. Refer Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 62-63 and its accompanying note for detail.

³The *Siddhis* are eight in number and are the mystical powers that come as a natural boon to the ascetic as part of his spiritual elevation. They give him super human powers and help him to accomplish astounding feats. Briefly these eight Siddhis are the following— (i) 'Anima' means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) 'Mahima' is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one's achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) 'Garima' is to have weight, stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) 'Laghima' is to have simplicity and humility; (v) 'Praapti' is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) 'Paraakram' is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) 'Ishwatwa' is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) 'Vashitwa' is to be able to control and subdue others.

⁴This is because Mantras and Yoga should not be used to acquire powers that give worldly fame and wealth which usually come naturally to those people who have certain super-natural occult powers. People flock to them from far and near seeking their blessings for their worldly problems and then donate huge largesse to them if their wishes are fulfilled. This should not be the aim of either the use of Mantra or of Yoga. Their main target should be self-purification, self-enlightenment and the realisation of the truth about the world, about the meaning and reality of this existence, about one's own self and the consciousness residing in one's bosom. It should be aimed at providing a gateway to spiritual liberation and deliverance rather than assembling a crowd of followers and blessing seekers, for in the latter case the ascetic would be tied down to this world instead of finding freedom from it. The delusions of grandeur, majesty, power and authority that accompany all worldly praises and honours, the hallucination that all worldly charms, pomp and pelf cause are very overpowering. That is why if a spiritual aspirant employs Mantra and Yoga to successfully acquire the Siddhis and thinks that he had done a great job by harnessing the potentials of Yoga and Mantra by the dint of his hard practice and sacrifice, then he is a man of a low intellect and wisdom.

Refer verse no. 56, 76-79 in this context.]

23. The dissolution of Chitta or mind is called Laya Yoga. [See note to verse no. 19.] It has been said to be of millions of types. For example, it includes the remembrance of the attributeless and formless Supreme Being, the lord God called Ishwar, while one goes about his daily chores in this world, such as while walking, sitting, waiting, sleeping, eating etc. [In other words, while the Brahm-realised person does the chores of his daily life, his mind should remain focused on the supreme Brahm instead of focusing on the

chore. The resultant effect would be that he would be doing them in a mechanical manner, not getting either emotionally involved in them, hoping to reap any rewards or fear any punishments from these deeds, nor even remembering at all what he is doing or is supposed to do. He is in a complete oblivious state of existence vis-à-vis the world, while perpetually remaining engrossed in the ecstasy derived from self-realisation and Brahm-realisation at the same time. His mind and sub-conscious are dissolved in the sense that they become non-existent and defunct; hence the Atma or the true 'self' of the aspirant is not subjected to being constantly disturbed and interfered by the numerous sensory inputs from the world which is now practically shut-off because of the dysfunctional mind. Since the sub-conscious is also defunct, the Atma is freed from any vestiges of such sensory inputs in the form of memory and its subtle nagging. With the mind shut-off, the creature virtually sees, hears, smells, tastes and feels nothing. Therefore obviously there is no memory of the world and its fascinating charms.

With this cleansing, the Atma wipes off all vestiges of its links with the material world which relies upon the mind to influence the Atma. In other words, the Atma is freed from the clutches of the world and its delusions.

As is obvious, such a man would be a total misfit for the society; his acts and deeds and behaviour would be un-conventional and irrational for the world. The resultant benefit would be that the world would stop bothering him, thinking that he is a lost case. This would free him from so much mundane botherations and the necessity of observing social niceties. His mind or Chitta would not be troubled by the problems of the body or the world.] (23).

24-25. Thus, the above describes what is Laya Yoga. Now listen to Hath Yoga. Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna, to visualise the presence of Lord Hari (Vishnu, the supreme Lord) in the center of the eyebrows (at the site where the so-called third eye of wisdom and transcendental knowledge is located; the area of the cerebrum), and the neutral state of Samadhi (when one becomes oblivious of the surroundings and remains in a state of perpetual ecstasy and bliss of self and conscious realisation)—these are the various limbs of Yoga that comes under the definition of Hath Yoga (24-25).

[Note—The terms used above need brief introduction. According to Patanjali who is considered to be the greatest exponent of Yoga, the latter consists of 8-fold path. These are briefly the following—(1) *Yam* or self restraint of the senses; (2) *Niyam* or observance of certain sacrosanct rules; (3) *Aasan* or postures for meditation; (4) *Pranayam* or breath control exercises for purification of the body and mind; (5) *Pratyahar* or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (6) *Dharna* or having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; (7) *Dhyan* or contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect, such as visualizing the presence of the supreme Brahm in the point of the forehead between the two eyebrows; and (8) *Samadhi* or a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation. These eight fold path of Yoga have been listed in Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 16, Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 12—12 ½ of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, as well as in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 28-34, and Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 2-10 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.]

26-27. The various Mudras (postures of the body while doing Yoga practice; the Vijay Tantra explains the esoteric meaning of Mudra thus—'the company of the good leads to

liberation and evil company to bondages; closure of evil company is termed as Mudra'. and Bandhas (the closure of apertures of the body through which the vital winds could escape) are the following types—Maha Mudra, Maha Bandha, Maha Vedha, Khechari Mudra, Jalandhar Bandha, Uddiyan Bandha, and Mool Bandha. Besides these, there are three other Mudras such as Vajroli, Amaroli and Sahjoli.

With the help of these different Mudras and Bandhas, the ascetic should research, investigate and delve deeply into the esoteric and mystical aspects of Pranav (i.e. the supreme Brahm or cosmic consciousness represented by the ethereal word OM that is used during meditation as a Mantra and heard by the ascetic as a deep and resonating cosmic sound during meditation) by deeply inhaling breath, retaining it inside the body and gradually exhaling it (26-27).

[Note—The various *Mudras* and *Bandhas* have been described below in verse nos. 112-129 of this Upanishad.

Some of the other Upanishads that detail them are the following—Yogchudamani and Jabal Darshan (Canto 3) of the Sam Veda tradition, Trishikhi Brahmin and Mandal Brahmin (1/3/5 and 2/1/5, 8) of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, the Dhyan Bindu Upanishad (verse nos. 73-93), Brahm Vidya Upanishad (verse nos. 69-70), Yogtattva Upanishad (verse nos. 26-27), Yoga Kundalini Upanishad (Canto 1, verse no. 41-52; Canto 2), Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition (Canto 5, verse nos. 40-42), Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda (Canto 5, verse nos. 44-45), and the Amritnaad Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

28-29. Oh Brahma! Now listen to the salient features of each of the different elements of Yoga.

Restrain over food habits and eating little (i.e. abstaining from over eating, indulgence in food, or eating restricted items) is the main component of Yam.

Similarly, non-killing and non-violence is the chief tenet amongst all the Niyams of Yoga.

The four main Aasans (sitting postures adopted during meditation or Yoga) are Siddha¹, Padma², Singh³ and Bhadra⁴ (28-29).

[Note—¹According to Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 49 ½, the *Siddhasan* or *Siddha Asan* (literally, a posture that bestows mystical powers, or a posture that only accomplished experts can do) is when the ankle of the left foot is tucked under the suture (which is a fold of skin between the anus and the testicles) and the right foot is placed on the top of the genitals. The body is kept erect in this posture. To sit in this posture, the two legs are first stretched out. The left leg is then bent at the knee and folded in so that the heel touches the genitals and the sole lies flat against the inner thighs of the right leg. Then the right leg is folded in and the heel is placed in front of the pubic bone right above the testicles, and the sole touches the inner thigh of the previously folded left leg. The two hands are stretched out and the outer side of the wrist of each hand is placed on the bent knee-joint of the respective side. The palm is opened and the thumb is touched by the bent first finger to form a virtual ring, with the remaining three fingers held straight out. The practitioner sits perfectly in a ram-rod straight position, with the spine, the neck and the head in a straight line. The mental sight is fixed on a spot in front of the nose, and this state of intense concentration is maintained as long as is feasible for the practitioner. Then the legs are gradually unfolded and after some period of relaxation, the process is repeated with the opposite leg being folded in first and placed below the other leg. [It is believed that this posture is one of the best postures to be adopted for Yoga amongst the eighty four lakh (84 x 10⁵) postures of meditation. The fact that there are as many

numbers of Aasans as there are species of living beings is endorsed by *Dyanbindu Upanishad*, verse no. 42 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. This Siddha Aasan is capable of cleansing all the seventy two thousand Naadis (ducts in the body), and is so-called because it is possible to access the divine source of cosmic energy trapped inside the body as well as experience the cosmic power of the kindled Spirit by employing this Aasan. The word 'Siddha' implies one who has acquired stupendous mystical and supernatural powers that are beyond the parameters of the physical and mundane world.

²The *Padma Aasan* according to verse no. 39 of Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, is to sit cross-legged so that the upper part of the feet (i.e. the opposite side of the sole) along with the toes of one leg is placed on the thigh of the opposite leg (i.e. left toes on the right thigh, and right toes on the left thigh), is called *Padmasan* (literally to sit in a lotus posture). [The soles would be pointing outwards while resting on the thighs and the body would be held erect—i.e. the spine, neck and head would be in a straight line. The hands, with palms facing upwards and resting one on the top of the other, are placed on the folded legs in front of and below the navel. The chin is drawn in and held tightly near the base of the Adam's apple at the pit of the throat. This sitting posture is said to dispel/ameliorate all diseases and counter or antidote all poisons. That is, this sitting posture is very beneficial for the body.]

³The *Singh Aasan*, according to Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 44, means to literally sit like a lion. It involves sitting in a posture so that the 'siwani', or the fold of skin between the anus and the genitals, called the suture, is pressed by the ankle bones of the opposite side, and the body is lowered on the legs which are bent or folded in from the knees, while the hands are stretched out and the open palms placed on the bent knee of the same side so that the fingers stretch out like a palm-fan with the open palm resting on the bent knee joint. [Usually in this posture, the mouth is wide open and the tongue protrudes out, while the eyes glare at some point in the distance or at the tip of the nose. This is how a lion sits. This posture makes the body resemble a sitting lion. This is a posture adored by ascetics (Yogis) and it is dedicated to the memory of Lord Narsingh, the half man and half lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu to liberate his great child devotee Prahalad from the torments inflicted upon him by his own demon father. Amongst the benefits of this Aasan is that it clears the voice and removes foul breath.]

⁴The *Bhadra Aasan*, according to Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 45, is literally to sit like a gentleman. It involves sitting in an erect posture by placing the two ankle joints under the buttocks on either side of the suture, i.e. the junction point of the testicles and the anus such that they (the two ankle joints) touch each other, and then using the hands to firmly clasp the soles of the feet of the respective side from the rear side of the buttock (i.e. left foot by the left hand and the right foot by the right hand). [This posture can neutralise the ill effects of all diseases which cause the production of toxins in the body or which are caused by administration of poisons or other toxins in the body; it helps to get rid of diseases as well.]

30. Oh the four-headed one (Brahma, the creator of the visible world)! Even at the beginning of Yoga practice, some hindrances come into play and try to deflect the aspirant from his spiritual path of purity and undisturbed meditation. They are laziness, indolence and lethargy, self praise and deriving pleasure in hearing about one's own greatness and majesty, talking deceitfully and being cunning, wily, guileful, fraudulent and crafty. Other difficulties that arise pertain to the proper and sanctified way of using the various complicated Mantras that strain the mind and undermine its ability to concentrate on other aspects of spiritual pursuit (30).

31. A sincere, wise, erudite and enlightened spiritual aspirant should forthwith forsake the following as symbols of hindrance that create obstacles in one's spiritual progress and elevation—material objects and things in this world (symbolising money and wealth), women, uncertainties, fickleness and restlessness. They are like the mirage seen in the desert because they appear to be very attractive and charming on their face, but would only lead to his ultimate demotion, degradation and fall from his exalted stature, and nullify any gains that accrue to him due to the positive effects of Yoga (31).

32. Guarding against these pitfalls, the wise and the most exalted spiritual aspirant should sit in the Padma Aasan and practice Pranayam (breath control exercises).

For this purpose he should erect a small thatched hut with a small door and no other openings (such as windows). [This would ensure that he is not disturbed by outside noise and light.] (32).

33. Then it should be smeared and plastered with a paste made from cow dung and made clean and reasonably attractive and conducive to spiritual pursuit and practice of Yoga. As far as possible, it should be cleaned of pests and insects such as bugs, mosquitoes, spiders etc. (33).

34. It should be swept and kept clean on a daily and regular basis. Some pleasant scent or sweet fragrance such as perfumed incense sticks called Dhup and Indian Bedellium called Guggal should be used to keep the atmosphere auspicious, healthy, pleasant and generally conducive to spiritual pursuits and mental peace. This is done by burning them inside the hut (34).

35. The seat on which the practitioner sits for the purpose of meditation should not be too high or too low. For the purpose of making a sitting-mat, one should spread some cloth, hide of a deer or a mat made of soft Kush grass (a sort of dark green reed). He should sit in the Padmasan posture on it (35).

36-37. The body should be kept erect and one should bow reverentially to the chosen deity who is to be worshipped. The thumb of the right hand should be pressed against the Pingla Naadi (i.e. the right nostrils), thereby effectively closing it, and breath should be inhaled through the left nostrils and held inside the body. This is called 'Kumbhak' phase of Pranayam (36).

38-39. After that, the breath should be exhaled gradually and easily through the Pingla Naadi (i.e. through the right nostril by removing the thumb and letting the air escape). [This is exhalation is called Rechak phase of Pranayam.]

Then the air should be inhaled through the Pingla Naadi (i.e. the right nostril instead of the left by closing the latter this time) and withheld inside the abdomen for as long as the ascetic can (during the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam). Then it should be gradually let out (through the left nostril) in a gradual and easy manner during the Rechak phase.

In this way, the air should be inhaled through the nostril by which it was exhaled (then held inside the body for certain time and then exhaled through the nostril of the opposite side) (38-39).

40. The time taken to move the hand gradually around the bent knee in a clockwise manner is called 'one Maatraa'. [The word Maatraa refers to one 'unit' as this will become a standard for the time to be taken in going through the various steps of Pranayam as described in the following verses.] (40).

41-42. To begin with, the air (breath) should be pulled in through the Ida Naadi (the left nostril) in a period of time which is equivalent to sixteen Maatraas. Then it should be withheld within the abdomen during the Kumbhak phase for a time equivalent to sixty four Maatraas (i.e. four times the time taken for inhalation). Finally, it should be exhaled through the Pingla Naadi (the right nostril) in a period of time equivalent to thirty two Maatraas (i.e. two times the time taken for inhalation).

The process should be repeated, but this time through the Pingla Naadi (the right nostril). And then the repetition is done alternatively using once the Ida and then the Pingla (41-42).

43. The entire process is called Kumbhak, and it should be repeated four times a day—morning, noon, evening and midnight. The number of times it is done should be evenly spread over these four periods, and attempt should be made to do eighty Kumbhaks daily. [That is, twenty cycles of inhalation-withholding-exhalation of breath in one sitting. The total would be $20 \times 4 = 80$ cycles during one day.] (43).

44. By practicing the above procedure for three continuous months, the various Naadis are cleansed of their impurities (i.e. they are de-clogged and de-toxified). With this purification of Naadis, relevant signs that indicate that it has been successfully done begin to show in the body of the practitioner (44).

45-46. [What are those signs? This is being answered now.] These signs are the following—the body feels light, the hunger is increased because the energy of the digestive organs is activated, and the body certainly loses its excess flab. At this time, one should avoid or totally forsake the food that can or does create any kind of obstacles in one's practice of Pranayam (45-46).

47-48. [These verses enumerate certain things from which the practitioner of Yoga should be better beware.] Food which has high salt and oil content, which is sour, too hot, very dry, sharp and pungent, green raw vegetables, spices such as asafetida, being near a burning fire to warm oneself (as is usually done during winter seasons), any matter related to women, excessive walking, taking a bath very early in the morning, fasting or any other kind of thing or activity that can cause any undue discomfort to the body should be best avoided.

In the early stages of practice, the best food is milk and clarified butter (called Ghee). [This is because this provides sufficient energy and nutrition to sustain the body.] (47-48).

49. Other staple foods that aid in the practice of Yoga (meditation) are wheat, the kidney bean or black gram, and rice. If practice is regularly done and above restrictions observed, one is able to acquire sufficient energy and stamina to hold the air (i.e. do Kumbhak) (49).

50. A stage is reached when the ascetic does not feel the need for Rechak or Purak (exhalation or inhalation). This state is called 'Keval Kumbhak', i.e. only holding of the breath. At this stage, Rechak and Purak should be forgotten. [The ascetic becomes so submerged in meditation and contemplation in due course of time that he becomes oblivious of what is happening to his body; whether it needs to exhale or inhale. All physical movements and activities of the body cease, metabolism comes to a virtual halt, and it becomes one like an inactive corpse. The ascetic remains submerged in the ecstasy obtained by self-realisation and deep concentration.] (50).

51. After an exalted ascetic is successful in mastering the art of doing 'Keval Kumbhak', nothing remains impossible for him in the three worlds. [That is, he acquires formidable mystical and super natural powers that enable him to do whatever he wants or successfully accomplish all his wishes in the entire world consisting of the terrestrial, the celestial and nether worlds. Nothing remains beyond his reach.]

Whatever sweat is produced during the practice of Yoga (i.e. Pranayam here) should be rubbed off on the body itself (instead of wiping it with a towel) (51).

52. When the ability to hold the air gradually increases, a stage is reached when the aspirant sitting in meditation has subtle vibrations in his body. The body begins to shiver and shake (like when one has fever) (52).

53-54. As practice progresses, one begins to act like a frog. Just like the frog jumps or hops and comes back to the earth to regain its original sitting posture, the practicing ascetic sitting in a Padmasan posture (i.e. the lotus posture) begins to jump off or hop from the ground. With the progress of practice, he begins to levitate from the ground and literally stays afloat in the air (instead of coming back to the ground)¹ (53-54).

[Note—¹The scientific reason is the vital airs present inside the body get heated up during protracted Kumbhak when they are trapped inside and not allowed to be let out. Heated air is lighter than ordinary air as is evident in the case of hot-air balloons. So the body, full of this heated air, begins to lift up from the ground. In the beginning it hops because the heating is not up to the mark, but when the air is sufficiently heated the lifting becomes permanent.]

55. An ascetic (Yogi) sitting in Padmasan posture who has sufficiently reached the state of control of the vital winds during the Kumbhak phase is able to remain lifted or levitated from the ground for a given length of time.

In this state he attempts and is also able to do other super human deeds and perform super human activities (55).

56. An erudite and wise ascetic is one who does not show off his mystical and super natural or super human capabilities and prowess. Instead of it, he should employ them to

encourage and inspire himself to do better and rise higher in his spiritual stature. This would give him courage and moral strength to overcome small or big problems, and they would not be able to inflict any pain or misery of any kind upon him (56).

[Note—In this context, refer verse nos. 76-79 of the present Yogtattva Upanishad, as well as Canto 1, verse no. 160 of the Yogshikha Upanishad.]

57-58. The ascetic's urine and stool output as well as his sleep or the feeling of drowsiness reduces to a bare minimum. [Since he has eaten and drunk precious little, it is but natural that the urine and stool would be reduced. Light meals and regular practice of Yoga exercises keep the body fit and trimmed, and since his stomach remains almost empty, his sleep and the sense of lethargy and sleepiness also reduces proportionately.]

He is freed from such bodily filth and discharges as muck (i.e. faecal matters, vomit, pus from festering wounds etc.), nasal discharges and mucus as witnessed during coryza (cough and cold), saliva that is in excess and needs to be spit out, excessive sweating, foul smell from the mouth etc.

By constant and diligent practice and gradual enhancement of his mystical powers, the ascetic is able to harness greater spiritual and physical energy, strength and stamina to attain great powers and authority (57-58).

59-60. In this way, the ascetic is able to obtain expertise in mastering mystical powers that are available but difficult to access in this world by ordinary mortal creatures. The result is that, with these divine and mystical powers and authorities, he is able to exercise control over all the living beings (called 'Bhu-chars') who move on the surface of this earth (such as other humans, animals, birds, insects, worms etc.).

Even such wild animals as tigers, 'Sharabhas' (i.e. the monkeys, deer, camels and birds and other such animals of these species), elephants, the white-footed antelope or blue bucks, lions etc.—every one of them can die by simply being hit by him. [These animals are very strong, cruel and ferocious. It is difficult to even come near them, impossible to face them single handedly and unarmed, to subdue them, and absolutely unimaginable to hit them with bare hands hard enough to kill them. But the ascetic acquires such stupendous powers that this almost impossible and super human task is actually possible for him; he can actually kill them by striking them with his unarmed and bare hands.]

The physical features of that ascetic become as attractive and charming as Kamdeo-cupid (who is considered as the most beautiful and handsome, most charming and passion-arousing God of lust, love and passion) (59-60).

61. He becomes so attractive and beautiful to look at that numerous women wish and become eager to have contact with him, enjoy his company and have a desire to establish relationship with him. But if any ascetic fulfills their wishes and has conjugal relationship with them, his sperms (symbolising his spiritual energy, strength, vitality and achievements) would be destroyed. [In other words, the ascetic is advised to avoid the company of woman at all costs.] (61).

62. So, he must not think of or fantasize about woman at all, and instead remain steady and diligent in his practice of Yoga. When he is able to retain his sperms (symbolising his

maintenance of chastity and celibacy which preserves his vital energy and stamina), a sweet fragrance begins to emanate from his body (62).

63. After that, the wise ascetic should sit in a calm and lonely place and do Japa of the Mantra for Pranav complete with its three Maatraas (syllables or sounds). [This Mantra is OM and the three Matraas are A, U and M, the three letters that constitute the basic sounds of OM.] This helps in destroying the sins of past lives (63).

[Note—In this context, refer to Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 6; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 9-17 and Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 4-8 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, as well as Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 74-79 and Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 3-10 of the Sam Veda tradition which elucidate upon the concept of OM in relation with Yoga.]

64. This Mantra of Pranav (i.e. the Mantra OM of the supreme Brahm known as Pranav) is potent and powerful enough to remove all types of hurdles and obstacles that come in the way of one's spiritual progress, as well as all the numerous faults, weaknesses, imperfections, blemishes or shortcomings that affect the character of the ordinary Jiva (living being, the creature), causing it to be blighted and preventing his pure and uncorrupt self, the Atma, from retaining its primarily untainted, pristine pure and immaculate nature and form. [Refer verse nos. 12-13 in this context.]

By practicing it regularly one can acquire all types of mystical powers, called Siddhis, in a gradual manner. These super human powers become accessible to him and come under his command (64).

65-66. After this (i.e. after practicing doing Japa with the help of OM Mantra so that the various faculties of the body become properly tuned and acclimatized to achieve success in meditation involving more rigorous exercises), the aspirant should practice holding the vital winds or airs inside his body (i.e. he should practice doing Pranayam). In other words, the phase of 'Ghata' (literally to become like a pitcher full of air; the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam) becomes easy for him.

During this phase of Ghata (Kumbhak phase), a mixing takes place and a uniform homogeneity is established between the following—Pran (the vital air or wind in the upper part of the body; the breath), Apaana (the vital air or wind in the intestines and lower part of the body and responsible for digestion and excretion), Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Jiva (literally the living creature, but for all practical purposes the Atma or pure consciousness of that creature because the Atma is its true identity), and the Parmatma (the supreme Soul; the Supreme Being; the cosmic soul). In other words, all dichotomy and apparent differences and distinctions between these units of creation are removed, they begin to work in concert, and an uniformity and sameness is established which eliminates the concept of duality by creating homogeneity and oneness in all the various units as mentioned above. That is, 'non-duality' is brought to the fore by removing all sense of duality¹.

The eclectic signs of this higher state of Yoga are being enumerated in the forthcoming verses (65-66).

[Note—¹To understand this phenomenon we can take a simple illustration. Suppose we have five types of water soluble salts, or any other chemical or thing for that matter. When they are put in a pitcher full of water and stirred, all the differences between them

are permanently removed and the resultant liquid is a homogeneous mixer of all the five ingredients. It would be impossible to differentiate one ingredient from the other, and equally impossible to separate them now. The water would acquire a unique character and quality which would be very different when the ingredients were not mixed in it. Likewise, these units of creation, such as Pran, Apaana, Mana, Buddhi, Atma and Parmatma, have their independent existence only till the time a man does not practice Yoga. Once he does and acquires reasonable success in it, the mixing takes place and all differences vanish. The resultant 'self' and the personality of the person would undergo a drastic change and it would be absolutely different from what he was known to be prior to the practicing of Yoga.

Whereas previously these units worked independently, thereby creating a vexing situation for the practitioner because of the tug and push of these units in various directions, but now they work in tandem, creating a harmonious environment for him. So, while previously he was like an unorganized man who feels at sea, now he is well organized and well choreographed. There would be a complete overhaul and transformation in his personality and behaviour.]

67. The ascetic should now practice for a quarter of the time that he used to practice earlier. [In other words, once the required result is obtained, once the spiritual aim of doing Yoga is achieved, which in the present case is attaining success in bringing about a union between the basic units in the body of the ascetic such as his two vital winds, Pran and Apaana, the two components of the brain, the mind and the intellect, and his individual soul with the cosmic Soul, what is now needed is to keep it up and not allow this great and rare achievement to gradually wither or dissipate away. Regular practice ensures that the gains of Yoga are sustained and made stable. But the earlier rigorous discipline is now no longer needed; only maintenance is required. Regular practice keeps the body attuned and under control; the gains of Yoga are not lost and forgotten.]

One should practice Pranayam for only one Prahar (i.e. roughly for a period of three hours) at a time, whether it is the day or night. [Pranayam is to be done twice daily—once in the morning and once in the evening. The one done in the morning precedes various Asanas, while the one done during the evening follows the Asanas. The maximum time limit for one session is 'one Prahar'—i.e. approximately three hours. It should not exceed this time, nor should it be hurried through. Refer Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 55.] (67).

68-69. The process of Kumbhak (holding of the inhaled air inside the body) should be practiced only once a day. While doing this, he should diligently pull or withdraw all his sense organs from their respective objects, and rein them in. This is called 'Pratyahar'. Whatever is seen by the eyes at that time should be treated as nothing but the Atma or pure consciousness (68-69).

70. Whatever is heard by the ears and smelled through the nose should be accepted in their purest form and essence as a manifestation of the eclectic virtues of the Atma (70).

[Note—A wise and enlightened man should perceive the world and its sensory inputs from the spiritual perspective. He should marvel at the wondrous ability of the hidden 'consciousness' that enables lifeless entities such as the flower to have such astounding beauty and emit such sweet enchanting fragrances that keep one enthralled. Similarly, the gross body which smells the sweet fragrance and sees the beauty of the flower is also

empowered to do so by the same 'consciousness'. It's such a wonderful spectacle as far as the enlightened aspirant is concerned. He is left awestruck at this miracle of creation.]

71. What is tasted by him by the tongue should also be treated as one of the many forms of the Atma. What is touched and felt by the skin should similarly be treated as the Atma (71).

[Note—In short, everything encountered by the enlightened man is perceived by him from a spiritual standpoint and not with the intention of deriving sensual pleasure or bodily comfort from them. Things in this world are to be viewed from the subtle angle and not from the gross perspective. For instance, when such a man eats anything, he marvels at the hidden ability of the 'cooked' food that has been subjected to immense battering during the process of cooking to sustain something called 'life' in his body which he is not able to see with his gross organ of sight called the eye, but is nevertheless experienced as being nourished and rejuvenated with this food. Even the treatment with the fire during the course of cooking couldn't kill the 'life sustaining' properties of the food. That is, the vital spark of life that was present in this food in its raw form, the spark that is universally known as the 'Atma' of anything, could not be destroyed in this food even by subjecting it to the harsh process of cooking. It is such a miracle of life indeed that high temperatures of the fire used during the process of cooking could not eliminate the Atma from the food!]

Similarly, such a wise man marvels at the ability of the Atma to enable the gross covering of the body's skin to feel things with which it comes into touch, or the bundle of muscular fibers called the tongue to differentiate between various fine tastes even though this tongue does not feel or see the chemicals that produce these sensations.

Therefore, the wise spiritual aspirant changes his view of the material world and looks everything from a spiritual perspective. He picks up the sublime goodness and auspicious values from the material world around him while discarding the trash and the gross.

In the context of practicing Yoga, the ascetic should endeavour to remove all distinctions between any two units of the creation. Instead, he should automatically, without any prodding and cajoling, treat them as the non-dual Atma appearing in all these varied forms. In other words, the sight seen by the eye, the smell smelt by the nose, the sound heard by the ears, the taste tasted by the tongue etc. are to be treated as one of the other aspects or attributes of the pure conscious Atma. A sense of all-prevailing non-duality is established; all notions of separateness, distinction, dichotomy and difference are done away with. A universal uniformity of oneness is established. This is exactly the purpose of Yoga—to establish a union between the disjointed units of creation to create the one indivisible and immutable supreme entity that is the ultimate Truth, but which has been veiled by Maya resulting in so much delusions, consternations and perplexities.]

72. Similarly, the ascetic should transfer the activities of all the organs of action in his own inner self, and make the Atma as their object. [In other words, all his external organs of action such as the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genital stop behaving and functioning like they are normally understood to be doing in an ordinary man. For example, he passes less urine and stool; he is not sexually aroused; he does not speak unnecessarily, so the mouth is used minimally; he remains calm and unmoving during the practice of Yoga, therefore the hands and legs also remain unmoving. Yet the Atma is very active; it is very agile and actively engaged in doing meditation; in deriving pleasure and ecstasy of self-realisation. Even when he is not doing active Yoga but involved in

daily chores of the mundane life, his mind is focused in his own inner self and the Atma resident in it rather than in the external world and the functioning of the organs of action. This would also mean that he would remain oblivious of what his organs of action are doing; he wouldn't know where the legs are taking him, what the hand is doing, what the mouth is speaking, what passes down the anus and kidneys etc. In other words, he is completely 'lost case' as far as this world of nice behaviour and rationality is concerned. This is the state of dissolution of the 'Chitta' or the mind and the sub-conscious. See also verse no. 23 which deals with this concept in detail.]

He should practice this process (of controlling his organs of action) regularly for a period of one Prahar (roughly three hours). [This is because he should be completely calm and undisturbed during the process of Pranayam. He should not allow his organs to be restless and fidgety in the least.] (72).

73-75. By regular practice of this Yoga, the ascetic's 'Chitta Shakti', i.e. the transcendental powers of his mind and sub-conscious, are gradually aroused and activated. This empowers him to gradually acquire divine and mystical powers which are magical, super human and astounding in nature. Such as for example, he can hear subtle and soft sounds from a great distance (i.e. he can hear things which are not normally heard; he becomes all-knowing); he can see things from a great distance, he can see through secrets and have a deep insight into the realm of the unknown (and therefore nothing remains hidden from him); he can arrive at a place from far away in a moment (i.e. he appears to be omnipresent); whatever he speaks become true; he can assume whatever form or shape he wishes at a short notice; he can become invisible; even iron can turn into gold by the touch of his urine and stool; he can move through the sky (like a bird or a God). Such mystical and super human powers begin to make their appearance in him; he begins to exhibit them in a gradual manner.

But he must be wary of getting deluded by this stupendous authority and super natural powers; he must not be swept off his feet by their accompanying pomp, pageantry, majesty, glamour, honours, praises, acclaim and fame. On the other hand, a wise and enlightened ascetic should remain focused on the spiritual aim and purpose of doing Yoga (rather than being carried away by the worldly fame and glory which are attendant to such attainment of mystical powers) (73-75).

76. All these Siddhis (mystical and super natural powers described in verse nos. 73-75) are impediments in one's spiritual pursuit and against the principal use for which Yoga is meant¹. Therefore, one should never disclose one's mystical abilities to others (because if he does so, it is bound to have a ricocheting effect, and it is unavoidable that boon-seekers would come in hordes to throng him from all sides. These people are selfish; they want to overcome their worldly problems by his intervention. But this would be at the cost of his own demotion and fall from his spiritual progress and high stature) (76).

[Note—¹The main purpose of Yoga is to bring about a union between the individual soul and the supreme Soul of creation; to ignite self-awareness in the practitioner; to bring about a harmony between the various subtle units of creation so that the creature's life becomes more productive and peaceful. If the gains of Yoga are diverted to worldly popularity and fame, to show off one's magical powers and gather a large crowd of boon-seekers, then the very first tenet of living in a serene and secluded place (a thatched hut with no opening except the doorway—see verse no. 32) would be violated. Adulation and

being surrounded by a horde of worldly admirers and those seeking his intercession for solving their worldly problems is not the way a spiritual person would naturally like to live. These people are selfish and they come running to him for their own personal benefit, and not because they have any genuine honour and the wish for his welfare in their mind. See verse no. 78 below. This would disturb his calmness of mind and spirit, and cause avoidable nuisance. Being a human being after all, it would naturally affect him in the short or long run, thereby bringing to a naught all his spiritual gains.

In this context, refer verse nos. 56, 77-79 of the present Yogtattva Upanishad, as well as Canto 1, verse no. 160 of the Yogshikha Upanishad.]

77. That is why, a wise and erudite ascetic should pretend to be like a fool, an ignorant person, or like a deaf. He should hide all his divine achievements and conceal every mystical power that he possesses in order to avoid publicity; he should remain unknown and all his achievements and powers should be undisclosed top secret (77).

78. The group of disciples would naturally and obviously keep him surrounded and plead with him for their selfish interests, requesting his intervention in the mundane affairs of life and for solving their own problems. But the wise ascetic is he who does not allow himself to become entangled in such mundane issues; he does not fall in the trap of getting engrossed or involved in their worldly problems and mundane concerns. On the contrary, he remains aloof and continues with his spiritual pursuit single-mindedly, unwaveringly and with an indifferent attitude towards everyone and everything else. He should not forget his main objective of doing Yoga (which is self-realisation, reaching the ultimate Truth, obtaining freedom from the fetters of ignorance that has tied him to this world of birth and death, and consequentially finding liberation and emancipation for his soul by merging it or uniting it with the supreme Soul of creation) (78).

79. That wise and sincere ascetic should concentrate what his teacher (who himself should be self-realised and a wise man of the highest order) has advised him, and shun all other types of activities and mundane affairs of the world. He should concentrate his attention and energy on doing and achieving success in Yoga (79).

80. In this way, by constant and diligent practice of Yoga, he is able to attain success in easily accomplishing the state of *Ghata*¹. This type of heightened state of Yogic accomplishment is only possible by regular and diligent practice. Mere talking and giving lectures is of no consequence; nothing can be achieved by it (80).

[Note—¹The word *Ghata* has been described in verse nos. 65-66. Basically it refers to the Kumbhak phase of Yoga (Pranayam). Such an ascetic is able to bring about a union between his own self and the Supreme Being of the creation. He not only understands the truth about himself but also about the whole creation because fundamentally all the creatures are moulded from the same mould and have the same basic truth identifying them. If this 'truth' or 'essence' in the form of the pure consciousness or Atma is removed, the whole world becomes one big huge mirage which has no substance and truth in it.

There is another connotation to this term *Ghata* in the context of the present verse. Here it is stressed that he should withdraw himself from the mundane affairs of the world, not even getting too involved with his disciples, and remain cocooned in his inner self,

symbolised by the thatched hut with no opening. The pitcher with a lid to cover its mouth tight is the most appropriate metaphor in this case. The inside of the Ghata or pitcher is like the inside of the thatched hut or the inner self of the ascetic. When he literally shuts himself in it, when he remains submerged in contemplation and meditation, thinking of nothing but his own pure consciousness residing in his bosom, shunning any contact with the outside world and remaining aloof from it and behaving like an ignorant fool or a man hard of hearing (see verse no. 77), he is said to have obtained a 'Ghata state of existence'. It is a metaphoric way of saying that he has cocooned himself in his inner self.

It will be seen that if we put anything inside a closed pitcher and immerse the pitcher in water, its contents remain dry and unaffected. That is exactly what is meant here. Even though such an enlightened ascetic lives in this world and goes about his daily chores in a routine manner, he is not at all affected by anything related with the world.]

81-82. Therefore, an ascetic should concentrate on his main objective of life and regularly practice Yoga with due diligence and sincerity.

Now, the third step in the knowledge of Yoga is being narrated. It is called 'Parichaya' or introduction. [In other words, after having outlined the necessary guards against the pitfalls that the aspirant may encounter in his meditation and spiritual practices, briefing him about what Yoga basically is, and how he should prepare himself for it, besides giving him a brief idea of its benefits and main objectives, now he is being introduced to the actual exercises of Yoga.]

Attempt is made to ignite the latent and hidden subtle energy hitherto trapped inside the Kundalini (the coiled subtle energy center at the bottom of the spine) by stoking it with the heated vital airs (which have been previously heated and mixed by doing Pranayam as outlined in the earlier verses) and concentrating it on this Kundalini.

The activated energy of the Kundalini should be eased into the Shushumna Naadi by unclogging its lower end and diverting or channelising the energy into it. [The Shushumna Naadi is a tubular duct that runs through the center of the spinal cord from the mouth of the Kundalini right up to the head.] (81-82).

83-84. Then the vital winds should be allowed to sneak inside the Shushumna Naadi (following its unclogging at its mouth at the Kundalini). This creates a thrilling and titillating sensation along this nerve. The mind should be focused on this process and follow it. The path of this Naadi is called the 'Maha Path', literally the grand avenue or highway. [This is because it is the grand 'royal avenue' or the highway of spiritualism that leads the ascetic to obtaining extreme bliss, ecstasy and self-realisation.]

An ascetic whose mind has virtually entered this Sushumna Naadi along with the vital winds (i.e. whose mind is concentrated on the eclectic, divine and mystical experience that is witnessed when the vital airs sneak up this nerve) is able to discern the distinctive forms of the five elements called the Panch Maha Bhuts and witness their personified forms in the shape of their patron deities or Gods called Panch Maha Devas. [The five elements are earth, water, fire, air and sky. The human body is made up of these five elements. Under normal circumstances their presence is not discernible because the body is a complex of all of them. But even as an expert chemist can immediately visualise what colour and form the ingredients of a given compound had in their individual forms before they combined to form the present chemical compound, the wise ascetic is able to visualise or perceive the subtle differences between the five elements

that constitute the body. The five principal deities called the 'Panch Maha Devas' are enumerated in the following verses.] (83-84).

85. The earth element is present as a dominant force from the foot to the knees. This earth has four directions, has a subtle yellow colour, and its seed Mantra is the Sanskrit letter (Varna) 'La' (as in 'love'). [There is another connotation of this last part of the verse. The earth is said to contain large and infinite deposits of 'salts' as ores etc. The ocean is also salty. The last word of this verse, i.e. 'Lavarna', indicates this fact.] (85).

86. This is the place where the patron God of earth known as Brahma, the four armed and four headed¹ creator of creation, has his symbolic presence. [In other words, the earth is represented by the creator Brahma. This is because the entire living world as we know it is present here on earth and no other planet. The earth is the only known inhabited part of the entire creation where creatures having life and consciousness in them—right from the one-celled amoeba up to the most complex and intelligently developed ones like the humans—live.]

In order to witness his presence and have his (Brahma's) subtle vision, the ascetic should inject and cover the earth element along with its seed Mantra 'La' with the vital winds or airs so that they are blended and a harmony is established between them. This results in the revelation of Brahma with the above features and with the complexion of gold (86).

[Note—¹There is a lot of symbolism in Hinduism, and if it is not properly understood in the correct context, a lot of hilarious, absurd and ridiculous situations arise, such as this Brahma with 'four arms and four heads'. From a rational perspective, this is absolute rubbish. But if one were to understand the underlying symbolism and philosophy, things assume a rational meaning. The four heads of Brahma stand for the four Vedas he created or pronounced. These Vedas are the repositories of all knowledge that exist in this creation, and they are the Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva. The four arms stand for the four directions of the globe—the north, west, south and east. Since he is the creator of the visible creation, he is expected to take care of the entire earth because it is on earth that all living creatures created by him would live.

Therefore, his four arms are symbolic of his duty and ability of taking care of all the four corners of this living world, and the four Vedas indicate his all-encompassing and all-inclusive knowledge, wisdom and erudition that empower and enable him to do so.

The colour of gold indicates the colour of richness, prosperity and fertility. The egg's yolk is also yellow because it harbours life and is rich with all essential nutrients needed by the nascent creation in its miniature form as the embryo.]

87. By concentrating one's attention and doing meditation for a period of five Ghatis (two hours) in the above described manner, an ascetic is able to conquer or subdue the earth element; he becomes the Lord of this element. Such an ascetic never dies due to some kind of shortcoming, fault, weakness or imperfection of the earth element in the body, or any injury caused by it to the body (87).

88. The water element has a predominant presence in the region from the knee to the anus. It is symbolically shaped like a half-moon, and its seed Mantra is 'Vam' (as in 'vulgar + sum') (88).

89-90. This is the place of symbolic residence of the patron God of water known as Sri Narayan (Lord Vishnu), the four armed, exalted and high Lord who has a crown over his head¹ (indicative of his position as the Lord and emperor of the entire living world), who is pure as crystal (because he is untainted, without any blemish and cannot be demoted from his exalted stature inspite of the fact that he has to look after the routine chores of taking care of the mundane affairs of the multifaceted world ridden with corruption and blemishes of all imaginable types, being its sustainer, nourisher and protector), and who is wearing a yellow coloured cloth (symbolic of his ability to sustain, nourish and protect the world as its emperor).

In order to witness his presence and have his subtle vision, the ascetic should inject and cover the water element along with its seed Mantra 'Vam' with the vital winds or airs so that they are blended and a harmony is established between them. This results in the revelation of Narayan with the above features in his inner self. He should focus his attention and mind on this vision for a period of five Ghantis (two hours). This helps him in getting rid of all sins and their evil consequences (89-90).

[Note—¹Lord Vishnu is the sustainer, nourisher and protector of all creatures. His four arms are indicative of this unique ability of his. Now, let us see what are those four units of creation which he is supposed to look after.

There are four types of creatures—viz. (i) 'Andaj' (those born from an egg, e.g. birds; (ii) 'Swadej' (those born from sweat and dampness, e.g. bacteria, fungi and lice; (iii) 'Udbhij' (those born from seeds, e.g. plants; and (iv) 'Jaraayuj' (those born from an embryo inside the womb, e.g. a man).

Then we have four classes of people in the society, called the four Varanas, and each has four phases, called the four Ashrams. The Hindu society has been divided into four sections or classes by ancient sages to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are— (a) Brahmins—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras —the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

Finally, the four Ashrams are the following—(a) Brahmacharya—this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style of a boarding school. (b) Grihastha—when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the 2nd phase called Grihastha Ashram which is a householder's life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life alongside the dealings with this deceptive world with all its

accompanying horrifying problems. (c) Vanprastha—this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Sanyas—this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting-off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and mediation, living a life of total renunciation, and begging for food for survival while single mindedly endeavouring for emancipation and salvation. This phase of Sanyas also has many stages depending upon the spiritual elevation and accomplishments of the aspirant, viz. Kutichak, Bahudak, Hansa, Paramhans, Turiyatit and Avadhut.

These four Ashrams, their characteristic features and virtues are described in detail in an Upanishad called 'Ashramo-panishad' belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition.

Thus we see that the four arms of Vishnu are indicative of his unique ability to protect the entire world of living creatures.]

91. After that, the ascetic need not fear from the water element in anyway, and neither would he die due to it (such as by drowning or by dehydration or thirst).

The fire element has its dominant presence from the anus to the heart region. [That is why all digestion of food and all the major internal organs that are responsible for the upkeep of the body and to continue the cycle of creation and prevent its extinguishing, such as the intestines, kidneys, the reproductive organs, the pancreas etc. are located in this region. It is here that the Kundalini is also located at the base of the spine. Without the presence of the heat in the lower part of the body, the vital airs cannot be heated and empowered to lift the body of an ascetic as has been described in verse no. 53-55 above. In practical life also we observe that the fire is always present at the lower end of the oven and not on its top.] (91).

92. The fire element has three corners (i.e. it is shaped symbolically like a triangle), has a red colour and the Sanskrit letter 'Ra' (as in 'run') as its seed or root Mantra. This fire should be stoked and ignited by injecting the air or wind element into it. [This is a common day phenomenon that the fire needs air to remain burning.] (92).

93. This is the symbolic abode of Lord Rudra or Shiva. [That is, he symbolises the fire element.] One should meditate upon this Lord who has three eyes¹, who is the one renowned for granting boons (to his followers and devotees, and in the presence case to the ascetic), who is as splendidous, illuminated and radiant as a sun which has just risen, and who has the ash of the fire sacrifice smeared all over his body (just like an ascetic, indicating that he is their great icon and patron deity of ascetics) (93).

[Note—¹As in the case of Brahma and Vishnu, the symbolism of Shiva having three eyes, which on the face of it appears to be an anomaly, is the following—his two eyes are the conventional eyes, and his third symbolises his deep insight and great wisdom and enlightenment. Shiva personifies the fire element which also has a symbolic significance. The fire is known to burn all impurities present in gold when it is put into it, thereby purifying the metal. Similarly, fire is used in blast furnaces to extract iron from its ore. Fire has the inherent ability to reduce to ashes all filth and garbage, which is a metaphoric way of saying that a person who has worshipped this element in the form of Shiva is supposed to have burnt all his faults, blemishes and shortcomings that taint his character and soul, thereby purifying his inner self. The ash is indicative of total renunciation and

detachment from the world of materialism, because it is indicative of a renunciate way of life and symbolically stands for burning of everything into the fire pit. That is why Lord Shiva has been called the patron God of ascetics, hermits and Sanyasis who worship the fire element only.

Besides these points, Shiva is the God assigned the task of concluding the world which necessitates his being closely associated with the 'fire element' in the sense that he must be as unrelenting, merciless, powerful and ferocious as the latter in order to conclude this creation inspite of all the odds. He must reduce everything to ashes just like the fire does. And it is from this ash that the new creation would emerge in due course. Herein lie the magic of creation and its chief Lord, Brahm, the Supreme Being—the fact that a new creation rises from ashes!]

94. By meditating this way on the fire element and Lord Shiva for a period of five Ghatīs (two hours), the ascetic cannot be tormented by the fire element so much so that it cannot burn or scorch him even if he is made to enter a fiercely burning fire (94).

95. The next vital primary element is the air element and it is primarily located in the body between the heart and the middle of the eyebrows in the forehead. It has a symbolic shape of a hexagon, is dark hued, and its seed or root Mantra is the Sanskrit letter 'Ya' (as in 'yearn'). The apex of this hexagon is at the point in the forehead where the two eyebrows meet, and where the third eye of wisdom is said to be located. That is why it is said to possess the quality of 'Bhaasvar', i.e. to be as bright as the sun during the day time (95).

[Note—In practical terms also, the primary wind that sustains life inside the otherwise dead and inane body is the breath that is inhaled thorough the nose and diverted to the lungs. Both these organs are located in the body in the region between the heart and the mid point of the eyebrows. If we join these organs, i.e. if a line is drawn linking the two lobes of the lungs, the triangular heart, the two shoulders and the root of the nose which has two openings, we will come with a rough shape of a hexagon. The lower-end point would be roughly the lower end of the sternum (i.e. the mid point between the heart and the lungs, the middle of the body where the ribs meet and the heart is felt to throb), and the other end is the root of the nose between the two eyebrows. Since the lower end is embedded in the abdomen, it is said to be 'dark or Krishna' in hue, while the upper end is said to be 'Bhaasvar' or like the sun because it is the location of the two eyes as well as the third eye of wisdom.]

96. The vital air or wind element is located in the body in the designated place marked by the letter 'Ya' of the Sanskrit language (as described in verse no. 95). The ascetic should always remember the all-knowing, omniscient and all-pervading Lord of all creation, known as Ishwar, in this region. This Lord is called 'Vishwatomukham', literally the face of the entire world1 (96).

[Note—The Ishwar is called the 'face of the world' obviously because when we see anyone, we first see his face and the person is recognised by his face. Since the entire creation is the visible manifestation of the supreme Brahm, it is the visible face of Brahm or Ishwar. This Ishwar is also the all-pervading supreme Brahm in the form of the conscious Atma which resides in the individual creature as his true 'self', as well as in the form of the universal Spirit that is indistinguishable from the air or wind element which pervades throughout the world. Even as the air element is uniformly and universally present everywhere in this creation, this 'spirit' is therefore also present in equal measure

everywhere. This spirit in the form of the air element is Ishwar or Lord of the world in the sense that no life is possible without it on this earth.]

97. If the ascetic meditates upon the supreme Lord called Vishwatomukh for a continuous period of five Ghatis (two hours), he can travel or move about in the sky just like the wind or air element. [In other words, he becomes as light as the air or wind element.] He has no fear from this element anymore and he never dies due to this element. [In other words, he never suffers from any disease related to the air or wind in the body such as from asthma, flatulence, improper movement of bowels, digestion, distribution of nutrients and blood inside the body, and all other functions that are governed by one or the other vital winds inside the body. He has not to suffer from suffocation and the fear from falling from a high place and dieing because in that case he would float in the air. Storms and other fierce forms of the wind cannot harm him also.] (97).

98. The sky element is located between the point midway of the two eyebrows and the top of the head. It is shaped like the sky (i.e. featureless, measureless and like an inverted parabolic transparent dish or bowl), is of the colour of smoke, and its seed or root Mantra is the Sanskrit letter 'Ha' (as in 'hut'). It is illuminated with a diffused light like the sky is during the daytime (98).

99. The ascetic should inject the air or wind element into this sky element, and fill it with it, visualizing that Lord Shankar (Shiva) is present here, seated on the letter 'Ha'¹. This Lord is a personification of the great Lord of all the Gods, and hence also known as Mahadeva², literally the great God. This Mahadeva is like a dot or point³ on the one hand, and like the vast, endless, featureless and infinite sky⁴ on the other hand. In the latter form he is known as Sada Shiva⁵, i.e. the eternal and ever-present Lord Shiva (99).

[Note—¹There is a lot of brilliant symbolism here. The letter 'Ha' is the first letter of the word 'Hans', meaning the divine swan. This bird is said to be very clean and wise, and therefore is the vehicle of the goddess of learning and wisdom, goddess Saraswati. By saying that the patron Lord of the sky element sits on this letter 'Ha', it is meant that this Lord is wisdom, erudition, learning and knowledge personified, he has full command over them. Hence he is the supreme Brahm.

²By this logic, Shankar is another name of Brahm. Since Brahm is the one from whom the entire creation has emerged, he is the greatest of all the Gods and their Lord, hence he is called Mahadeva. Thus, Mahadeva and Shankar become interchangeable and synonymous.

³The origin of the creation was due to a vibration in the cosmic primordial gel much like ripples on the surface of a calm lake. This generated waves and these waves created energy to power the initial phases of the process of creation. But the vibration must have started from one single point. This is the 'dot' referred in this verse. It also refers to the fact that everything in existence has its origin from one 'point' source known as Brahm. The concept of Bindu and 'dot' have been explained in Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 2, 37, 39-40, and Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 1, 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

⁴Now, this Brahm is not limited to one single point, but it spread as far and wide as the vast sky could spread. It was diffused in the sky like smoke, and that is why the colour of the sky element is symbolically depicted to be like that of the smoke.

⁵'Shiva' means someone who is auspicious, truthful and beautiful, and 'Sada' means one who is always the same, is constant, perpetual, consistent, ever-present, uniform and

universal. All these qualities are present in the supreme Brahm. That is why the latter is called Sada Shiva.

So in a nutshell, Shankar and Shiva is the same great God who is the Lord of all the Gods as well as of the rest of the creation, i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being, personified, besides possessing all the qualities of wisdom, erudition, sagacity, knowledge, expertise, various skills etc. personified by goddess Saraswati riding on the Hans. The concept of 'Hans' has been elaborately explained in a number of Upanishads, viz. (a) Krishna Yajur Veda—Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6; Canto 6, verse no. 15; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3-4; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 24, 61-65; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11, and Canto 6, verse no. 20, 52-54. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Hanso-panishad is exclusively dedicated to explain the concept of the pure conscious Atma by way of using the metaphor of a Hans. (c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 82-83.]

100. This Lord Shiva is most holy, divine, pure and immaculate, and as clear and clean as pure crystal. He has a crescent moon tucked in the lock of hairs on his head. He has five mouths, is very sober, gentle and pleasant, and has ten arms and three eyes (100).

[Note—Since Lord Shiva is the patron God of Yogis or those ascetics who do Yoga, especially those who practice its exercises and rituals as propounded by Patanjali, and this Upanishads deals with Yoga, the supreme transcendental Supreme Being known as Brahm of metaphysics and Upanishads is personified here in him.

Lord Shiva has been depicted in the Purans as having a *crescent moon* on his forehead. The moon is said to have sixteen Kalaas or phases, symbolising the sixteen Kalaas or aspects out of the total of sixty four Kalaas of the supreme Brahm. These sixteen Kalaas represent the visible world which is one fourth part of the entire creation consisting of the remaining of the Kalaas of Brahm. The visible world is called 'one Pada' or one leg or one aspect or Kalaa of Brahm. So, Shiva is the Lord who presides over the entire visible part of creation, and this world is his ornamentation in the sense that the Lord appears to be so beautiful if we consider the beauty of Nature as the astounding beauty and the expert craftsmanship of Shiva on display.

The *five heads* of Shiva stand for the 'Panch Vyom' or the five forms that the sky element is said to have. According to Vedanta, the concept of the *sky* or 'Akash' has many connotations. According to one interpretation, there are *five* subtle skies representing the space surrounding the five sheaths or *Koshas* present in the body of a creature. They are the sheaths that surround the Atma and are called 'Panch Akash'. These are the following—(1) the Food Sheath called Anna Maye Kosh; (2) the Vital Air Sheath called Pran Maye Kosh; (3) the Mental Sheath called Manomaye Kosh; (4) the Intellectual Sheath called Vigyan Maye Kosh; and (5) the Bliss Sheath called Anand Maye Kosh. Ref.-- Mudgal Upanishad, 4/5 of the Rig Veda.

The *ten arms* of Shiva stand for the ten forms of the subtle sky element. They are the following—(1) Ghataakash—the space inside a hollow pot; (2) Mathakash—the space inside a holy building, such as a holy shrine, a monastery, an abbey etc.; (3) Hridayakash—the subtle space inside the heart; (4) Akash—the vacant or blank space above the earth; (5) Suryakash—the space of the solar system; the space around the sun, or the solar system illuminated by the light of the sun; (6) Paraakash—the space above or beyond the solar system, it is said to burn with the celestial fire; (7) Mahakash—the great sky that is aglow with divine illumination, the heaven; that space which is radiant with a divine glow; (8) Paramakash—the supreme sky beyond the Mahakash, it is said to be very magnificent and encloses everything that exists, including all the other skies; that

space which is illuminated, all pervading, all encompassing and full of bliss and felicity; (9) Tattwakash—the elementary space that is at the core of the concept of space, or the space that surrounds the basic elements of creation; by natural corollary it refers to the subtle, sublime, ethereal and supreme space where the eternal, transcendental Brahm has his abode because Brahm is the cause of all the basic elements of creation; there is complete beatitude and felicity there; that space which surrounds the essential truth known as Brahm; and (10) Anatariksha—the physical space where stars are present in deep space; the inter-galactic space. Besides these, there is one more space called 'Swarga' which means heaven or the Duloka.

These skies have been ascribed different names just to facilitate understanding, and not because any one form of sky is fundamentally different from the other. For example, the space present inside the mud-pot, called the Ghata-kash, is the same as the space present outside the body of the pot. When the pot is broken, the demarcation wall of the body of the pot is removed, and both the space inside and outside of the erstwhile pot become indistinguishably and inseparably the same. Therefore, the various names are artificial and misnomers.

The *three eyes* consist of two normal conventional eyes and the third eye of wisdom and deep insight. The significance of the three eyes have been explained in note of verse no. 93 above.]

101. That Lord Shiva is armed with all types of weapons (as a symbol of protection against or to counter all sorts of worldly evils and faults that might attack a spiritual aspirant and attempt to pull him down from the exalted position that he has acquired by so hard effort). He is also decorated with numerous ornaments (as a symbol of his divine beauty and magnificence, as a token of his natural charm and a pleasant and appealing appearance). Goddess Parvati his divine consort and she literally is his other half. [That is, if Shiva is the supreme Brahm or Supreme Being, Parvati is his Prakriti and Maya. If Shiva is the Viraat Purush, Parvati is Mother Nature.] He is the one who grants boons and is the root and primary cause of all conceivable causes and reasons that exist in this world (101).

102. If that Lord Shiva is meditated upon as a personification of the sky element and as being inherently present in this element, it is certain that the practitioner is able to acquire the mystical powers to move through the sky (like a bird or other sky-borne creatures).

By this meditation, the spiritual aspirant feels an immense sense of satisfaction and happiness no matter where he lives¹ (102).

[Note--¹This is because he feels the freedom to move about any where he likes, and is not constrained to the earth. Another interpretation is that he feels as light as the air or wind element because this is the only element that fills the entire space of the sky and can move in at its will. He feels unrestrained and free like the bird. He also feels untainted, unblemished, un-faulted and untarnished like the pure and colourless sky element. He feels infinite, vast, open, eternal and imperishable as the sky element. He feels himself as being all-pervading, omnipresent and all-covering just like the sky element. This notion and feeling would naturally be spiritually and emotionally uplifting and morale boosting for him; he would feel elated and accomplished.]

103. In this way, the body of an ascetic who has successfully achieved that state of Yoga when he can steadily and consistently meditate upon the five elements and visualise their personified forms as the five divine Gods (as described in forgoing verses) with

unwavering conviction becomes sturdy, strong and robust. [This is possible because he has gained absolute control over the body and has been able to harness its natural energy, its inherent stamina and strength, its hidden potentials and powers to bring out the best in it. Since the body is made up of five basic elements such as earth, water, fire, air and sky, it follows that he is able to establish a symbolic control over these elements and rein in their individual as well as combined powers for his own benefit. Even in today's world, those who do regular physical training, do regular exercises and go to gymnasiums, have a well-built, muscular, handsome, strong and robust frame of their body as compared to those who are negligent in this aspect.]

With a well-tuned, strong and robust body, a vigorous constitution, properly channeled vitality and energy that is inherent in all the creatures but is usually wasted by negligence and over-indulgence, it is but natural that they have no fear from death (in the sense that they do not have serious diseases and lead a fruitful life till its natural end) (103).

104. Even at the time of the great flood during the dooms day, such an accomplished ascetic never has to fear from anything. He does not have any worry and mental torments even in this drastic situation. [This is obvious. He has already established lordship over the five elements, and therefore he has no fear from the 'water' that floods the 'earth'. Since the 'fire' element is latently present inside his own body in a latent form, he need not worry to keep warm either during the chill that follows the flooding of the earth at the time of the dooms-day. He has control over the 'air' and 'sky' elements, so he can not be drowned, as he would float in the air and go to any place that is safe for him by the sky route like a bird, and perch on some high ground till the water of the flood recedes. This is a remarkable scene taken directly from the great flooding of the Genesis of the Holy Bible. Not only himself, he would also save others who take refuge with him. He has acquired sufficient mystical powers to foresee the future and see the imminent flooding. So he can warn others and move to safer place like a high ground on a hill or mountain till the water recedes. This is the physical dimension of this verse. The metaphysical and spiritual dimension is that he has become so enlightened that he sees no difference between death and life, and treats both equally as the wish of the Lord. And of course the Lord protects him as he had protected Noah during the great deluge.]

The ascetic should meditate upon the divine Gods who grant various boons and mystical powers for a period of six Ghatis (two hours and twenty four minutes) by holding breath inside the body (i.e. while doing Kumbhak) (104).

105. By meditating upon the Sagun forms of the Divinity (i.e. by meditating upon and worshipping the Supreme Being or the transcendental Brahm in the form of various Gods such as the Trinity Gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and their different manifestations) the ascetic is able to acquire the different Siddhis (mystical powers) such as Anima etc.

On the other hand, if he meditates upon the Nirguna aspect of the same Divinity (i.e. as the un-manifest subtle and sublime pure consciousness known as the Atma and the subtle aspects of creation in the form of Nature with all its sublime dimensions), he would attain the exalted state of Samadhi (which is a trance-like state of spiritual attainment and bliss) (105).

[Note—In this context, refer Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 30-36.]

106. A diligent and sincere ascetic can achieve success in obtaining the eclectic state of Samadhi in short period of twelve days only. Such an accomplished ascetic is able to achieve Mukti (liberation and deliverance) from this world even while he lives in it by steadying his vital winds (and thereby attaining peace from his natural restlessness and obtaining the eclectic state of Samadhi where he finds perpetual bliss of self-realisation) (106).

107. During the state of Samadhi, there remains no difference between the Jivatma (the individual creature in his true form as his pure conscious soul known as the Atma) and the Parmatma (the cosmic, all-pervading and all-incorporating supreme transcendental Soul of creation). In other words, a union is established between them, thereby removing any artificial distinction that might have been there till the point this stage of Yoga is reached. [After all this is the exact purpose of Yoga—i.e. to bring about a harmony and ultimate union between them; Samadhi is the successful culmination of Yoga.]

During this state, if one wishes to leave one's body then it is also possible to do it (without the fear of committing the sin of suicide) (107).

108-109. In this way, an expert and self-realised ascetic can dissolve himself or merge his own 'self' with the supreme transcendental Brahm (by establishing a union between his own consciousness and cosmic Consciousness). He does not have to take birth again.

On the contrary, if his body is dear to him and he does not wish to leave it, i.e. 'he', as his pure self, the consciousness or Atma, does not wish to discard his body and wish to retain it, then he can do so¹. He can acquire the various Siddhis (mystical powers) such as Anima etc. and go to any place he wishes where the body has no reach, so much so that he can become a God and live in the heaven if he so wishes² (108-109).

[Note—¹For all practical purposes as far as he is concerned, this would be equivalent to merging his soul with Brahm because the supreme Brahm resides in his own 'self' as his Atma or consciousness as well as his Pran or spark of life. Besides this, the very fact that he has reached this state of Samadhi itself indicates that he has crossed the earlier stages where any of the worldly corruptions can demote him and pull him away from his spiritually exalted stature. He would have realised that the body is not his 'true self' but it is the Atma, and that this Atma is the supreme transcendental Consciousness personified. How can anyone with such an enlightened view of the 'self' can ever be expected to be weighed on the same scale as his other brethren who treat their bodies as their 'self' and remain engrossed in this material world of sense objects. So, though he retains the body and appears to be of a lower category than the ascetic who has discarded his body to merge his 'self' with the supreme Brahm, basically there is no difference between the two. The former type of ascetic who retains the body is called 'Jivan Mukta', or the one who has obtained liberation and deliverance from the fetters of the world while still living in it because he has certain obligations to fulfill, and the latter is called 'Videha Mukta', or the one who has obtained the same liberation and deliverance by abandoning the body. The body in both the cases causes no hindrance for him, because even while he has retained the body as a Jivan Mukta if he prefers the option to do so, he already has acquired so much divine mystical and magical powers called the various Siddhis that he can perform super human and super natural deeds that anyone with a body cannot ever expect or hope to do. These have been enumerated in verse no. 73-74, 87, 91, 94, 97 and 102.

²But there is subtle catch here which must be closely observed. Earlier verse no. 21-22 and 76-79 have clearly stated that the use of various Mantras and obtaining Siddhis are impediments in obtaining the true fruit of Yoga; those who wish to acquire them and remain satisfied with them are of a very low type of Yogi.

Further, verse nos. 14-18 describe what constitutes ‘true Gyan’ or true knowledge and wisdom, and it is to obtain the only state of existence that can give eternity to the Atma, and it is called ‘Kaivalya’, and this is the merger of the self with the supreme Self. This is obtainable when the Atma discards the body and finds final liberation and deliverance, or ultimate emancipation and salvation. This is ‘unconditional Mukti’, while the one obtained while retaining the body would then naturally be a ‘conditional Mukti’ because while the body is still there, Mukti cannot be absolute; it is conditional and subject to certain parameters and conditions that naturally come when someone has an obligation to fulfill. The obligation in this case is towards the body because the Atma is obliged to remain inside it and it must pay its due respect and the dwelling ‘rent’ to it! Therefore, the Atma is under ‘conditioned freedom’ if the ascetic chooses to retain the body and remain inside it instead of discarding it and becoming ‘absolutely free’, in which case the Atma becomes ‘unconditionally free’. The later state is called ‘Kaivalya’ Mukti. The body has to be discarded ultimately, sooner or later; the soul is therefore not ‘absolutely’ free if the ascetic retains the body as compared to the case where he decides to permanently abandon it once the window of golden opportunity arrives during Samadhi.

Therefore, the ascetic has two options open to him as already pointed out in verse nos. 105-107—i.e. either to obtain Kaivalya Mukti which is like the Videha Mukti, or to obtain Jivan Mukti. There is only a subtle hair-fine difference between the two. Refer verse nos. 17-18 and 23 in this context.]

110. With the acquisition of mystical powers, the expert ascetic can transform himself into a Yaksha (a kind of demi-god who is supposed to guard the treasury and garden of Gods) and vice versa in a moment’s time. He is also able to assume the form of a lion, an elephant, a horse etc. at his free will (110).

111. When an ascetic has obtained the exalted and divine stature equivalent to that of Maheshwar (the great Ishwar, the great Lord, Lord Shiva, the supreme Brahm, which is possible at the successful culmination of Samadhi as clearly mentioned in verse no. 104-105 and 107), he is free to act and behave as he wishes. The difference is only on how the achievements or rewards of Yoga are practiced or utilised, and not in the basic nature of the achievement or reward itself¹ (111).

[Note--¹That does not mean he should become a reckless rogue and burden the creation with his wayward behaviour. That would kill the very spirit of Yoga. We have examples of such ascetics though who did severe Tapa (penance, austerity and observance of the strictest religious vows), which is another form of Yoga, to obtain various boons from different Gods, which are like obtaining various Siddhis, only to exploit these super natural powers to become reckless and cruel ‘demons’.

So we come to a very interesting conclusion here—the difference between a mystic and a self-realised ascetic who is holy and pious and Brahm personified, and a demon, is the use to which he puts his newly acquired status and powers! The same authority and power can elevate him to Godhood and demote him to Demon-hood.]

112. [Now certain sitting postures to be adopted for the purpose doing Yoga to attain the benefits listed in this Upanishad are being described. Refer verse nos. 26-27.]

The practitioner of Yoga should sit in such a way that he presses his genital with the heels of his left leg and stretches the right leg straight in front of him. Then he should firmly clasp the big toe of this (right) leg with both his hands (112).

113. The chin is to be brought close to the chest. Sitting in this posture, he should pull in the air (i.e. breathe in air) slowly (i.e. do 'Purak') and hold it inside the body during the phase called Kumbhak as long as he can. Then this air should be gradually exhaled during the phase called Rechak (113).

114. This process should be repeated with the other side of the body. That is, after completing the cycle of inhalation-holding-exhalation of breath while the left leg is folded inwards at the knee-joint and the right leg stretched out, the process should be repeated with the right leg folded inwards at the knee-joint and its heels pressing against the genital, and the left leg stretched out and its big toes firmly clasped by both the hands. Thereafter, the breathing ritual is repeated once again.

Thus, the two steps of this exercise are alternated with each other for as long as the ascetic wishes to do Yoga (114).

115-116. This exercise and sitting posture is called 'Maha-Bandh'. The two ways mentioned above—i.e. one in which the genital is pressed with the heel of the left leg, and other when it is pressed with the heel of the right leg, are both called Maha-Bandh¹.

An ascetic who is sitting in this Maha-Bandh can withhold the air inside the body and prevent its escape from it by pulling in the muscles of the throat so as to close the opening of the upper end of the trachea, and at the same time constrict the nostrils to aid in the process² (115-116).

[Note—¹The word 'Bandh' means to close and restrict. Since the escape of Pran in the form of vital winds is closed in this and other such Bandhs, they are so named. The present Bandh is called 'Maha' because it is a 'great' closure.

²It must be noted that both his hands are tied in clasping the toe of the respective leg, and therefore they are not free to clamp the nostril to stop the air from forcing itself out as is usually done during normal breath control exercise called Pranayam. Therefore he must constrict the muscles of the throat and the nostrils voluntarily to close the opening of the mouth and the nostrils to effectively block the escape of air.]

117-122. Those ascetics who have acquired various Siddhis or who have become experts in doing Yoga continue to practice the Maha-Vedha (Maha-Bandh) exercise regularly and continuously.

Now, the 'Khechari Mudra' is being described. During this Mudra (a posture or form in which the particular organ of the body is held during meditation), the tongue is inverted inwards and tucked inside the back of the mouth so as to close its rear opening. The eyesight is kept strictly fixed in the central point between the two eyebrows.

The 'Jalandhar-Bandh' is to constrict the opening of the throat by pulling its muscles taut, and holding the chin tightly and steadily above the chest. This sitting posture is so potent and effective that it virtually acts like a lion employed to conquer the

elephant representing death. [In other words, the ascetic who practices this Jalandhar Bandh can easily overcome death.]

The Bandh which helps the Pran (i.e. the Apaana Vayu, the vital wind that is present in the lower part of the body) to lift itself and move up the Shushumna Naadi (the nerve that moves from the lower end of the spinal cord right up to the top of the head) has been called 'Uddiyan Bandh' by expert ascetics. [The word 'Uddiyan' implies something that can fly; here the epithet is apt for the reason that this process, if properly done and successfully accomplished, enables the practitioner to lift himself from the ground and float in the air—see verse no. 53-55.]

The 'Yoni Bandh' is done by constricting the genitalia by pressing it hard with the heels of the leg and pulling the muscles in the pelvic region inwards by conscious effort. At the same time, the Apaana wind (the vital wind present in the lower bowels) is pulled upwards and not allowed to move down and pass out through the anus as flatus by constricting the muscles of the lower bowels simultaneously with the pressing of the genital.

When this Yoni Bandh is practiced in conjunction with the 'Mool Bandh', which is literally the closing of the root, or closing of the lower apertures of the body such as the anus and urinary openings, then it is possible to mix the two vital winds such as Pran (the vital wind in the upper part of the body) and Apaana (the wind in the lower part of the body) and bring about a harmony between them and synchronise their vibrations so that the ascetic is able to hear the Naad (the cosmic sound emanating in ether) that appears to emanate from a point called a Bindu and radiating in all the directions from there. This Naad overwhelms the ascetic and he becomes drowned in its reverberations (which appear to massage his nerves and bless him with divine calmness and bliss). This Yoga (i.e. the process of meditation which brings about a union) is without doubt potent enough to grant definite success to the ascetic in obtaining the various Siddhis (as listed in numerous verses of this Upanishad).

Now, the special Mudra called 'Vipreet-karani Mudra'¹ is being narrated. This is said to destroy or eliminate all kinds of diseases and obstacles that the ascetic might be facing and tormented by (117-122).

[Note--¹The word 'Vipreet' means that which is against the conventional norm, or which goes against the criterions of normal behaviour. In the present case the movement of the vital winds has been reversed, i.e. the Pran has a normal tendency to come in and go out from the nostrils, and the Apaana continuously moves downwards and never upwards. With the practice of above Bandhs and Mudras as described in verse nos. 112-122, the normal movement of the vital winds is tampered with. They are made to act against their normal behaviour. Hence, this process is compositely called 'Vipreet-karan', i.e. to make them behave against their natural pattern.]

According to this Upanishad however, the Vipreet-karan is a different process as described below in verse no. 124. According to Patanjali's Yog Sutra, this is known as 'Sarvaanga Aasan', literally the posture of Yoga that benefits the whole body. Obviously this terminology is also applicable to this process because if the digestive organs function properly and a man is able to digest food properly and derive nutrition from it, it is natural that his entire body would benefit.]

123. By practicing this Vipreet-karan Yoga, the practitioner's weakened hunger and the energy to digest food is re-kindled and rejuvenated, resulting in increase of appetite and the ability to digest more food (123).

124. The fire of hunger once stoked by this Mudra must be duly supplied with fuel in the form of food, for otherwise it would burn the reserve fuel of the body, resulting in emaciation.

To do this Vipreet-karan Mudra, the head is kept low and the both the legs are lifted up simultaneously. This posture is practiced for a few moments the first day. [For this purpose, the practitioner lies flat on the ground and raises the legs slowly upwards. This automatically would exert an inward and upward pull on the abdominal and intestinal muscles and strengthen them besides helping the Apaana wind to move upwards through the Shushumna Naadi. Since the direction of the flow of the Apaana wind is reversed, and the legs are so positioned that their level is above that of the head which is an unconventional position under normal circumstances for a body lying flat on the ground, this posture is so named as 'Vipreet-karan'.] (124).

125. From the second day onwards, the time for which this Vipreet-karan Mudra is practiced is increased gradually on a day to day basis (along with the angle of lifting of the legs, till the time they are held at right angles to the ground). This should be practiced for a minimum period of six months by the time of which the wrinkles on the body of the practitioner vanish and the graying of his hairs stop (125).

126. The ascetic who practices this (Vipreet-karan Mudra) for one Prahar (three hours) daily, he is able to subdue Kaal. That is, he is able to conquer death because his body becomes strong, sturdy and robust, he is able to digest and benefit from food eaten, and his body gets de-toxified.

This is also called the 'Vajroli Mudra'¹ because it makes him as strong, sturdy, robust and vigorous as Vajra, the invincible and strong weapon of Indra, the king of Gods. One who practices this Mudra daily is soon becomes an accomplished Yogi who is said to have mastered all the Siddhis (esoteric, eclectic and mystical divine powers) (126).

[Note—¹It is pertinent to note here that all these Aasans and Mudras are inter-linked and not detached from one another. They are inter-dependent and not mutually excluding. They form part of a comprehensive and composite process called Yoga which can bestow the mystical powers called Siddhis to the practitioner. Various Yoga texts depict variations in the way they are done, and sometimes there is a lot of confusion. For example, the Vipreet-karan Mudra as described in this Upanishad is different from how Patanjali has described them. In his description, the particular way this Mudra is done as per this Upanishad is called 'Saalamba Sarwaanga Aasan'. Similarly, the Vajroli Mudra as implied here is different from the way the Vajra Aasan is done according to Patanjali. So, instead of getting confused with the intricacies and details of what this text says and what that says, the ascetic should understand the hidden esoteric philosophy and the idea behind the exercise by understanding the meaning of the word and its broader implications and how is it to be applied in practice to benefit him. If the basic concepts are firmly grasped, the details can be adjusted according to individual needs and circumstances. See note to verse no. 117-122 in this context.

If we go strictly by Patanjali's version of Aasans, then 'Vajra Aasan' is the posture whereby the body is bent backwards to such an extent that the head rests on the upturned soles of the two legs that are bent inwards at the knee-joints so that the ankle-joint and heels are tucked underneath the buttock of the respective side and the weight of the body

rests on the tucked-in legs. For this, the practitioner sits on the ground with his two legs bent inwards from the knee. He bends the body backwards like a bow so that the head rests on the sole of the feet pointing to the rear of the body. Viewed from a distance, the practitioner appears to be in a roughly ring shape.]

127. One who becomes well-versed in practicing this magnificent but esoteric art of doing Yoga as narrated here is deemed to have gained all the mystical, eclectic and divine benefits or rewards called the various Siddhis that automatically accrue to those who do such Yoga. That is, he acquires super natural and super human powers. As a result, he is able to know the events of the past as well as the future, and is certainly able to move through the sky. [Refer verse nos. 97, 102.] (127).

128. An ascetic who drinks 'Amari' (urine) daily and smells it along with doing the Vajroli Mudra is known as 'Amroli', i.e. the one who is an accomplished ascetic who follows the path of Yoga where urine (of the self or from the cow) acquires a central part of the purification process (128).

[Note—Drinking of urine should not be treated as a vulgar, repulsive and repugnant exercise. It has medicinal value and is often used as a self-created antidote to various poisons present in the body. There is a field of treatment called 'urine therapy' wherein urine is used in potency form like in Homeopathic drugs to cleanse the body of its toxins. It is like self immunization or auto-vaccine.]

129. When the ascetic is successfully able to do all the above exercises of Yoga, it is said that he has done 'Raaj Yoga'; there is no doubt about it. When he is successful in doing Raj Yoga, he need not undertake other harsher forms of physical exercises of Yoga that are described as 'Hath Yoga' (129).

[Note—The Raaj Yoga exercises are so called because they mark the high citadel of achievement in Yoga. The word 'Raaj' refers to the king, and therefore an ascetic who has successfully done all the exercises of Yoga is deemed to be like the king amongst those who aspire to reach a high level of spiritual attainment through the path of Yoga.

It is not that Raaj Yoga is less punishing and demanding than the Yoga classified as Hath Yoga, but the only perceivable difference is that now they need not go through the rigours of Yoga exercises for an extended period of time as mentioned earlier in verse no. 67 above. Whereas the word 'Hath' means forceful, stiff, obstinate and adamant, its relaxed form is called 'Raaj'. The exercises in which the body is forced to undergo ruthless stress and subjected to stiff penalty by twisting and turning it against its will is therefore called Hath Yoga. Compared to those exercises, the ones described as Raaj Yoga are mild and done to maintain practice and keep the gains of Yoga perpetual and everlasting.

When an ascetic is successful in doing Raaj Yoga, he need not worry about doing Hath Yoga any longer. This is because Raaj Yoga entails total control of the mind and intellect. Once this objective is achieved, i.e. once the restlessness of the body and its wayward sense organs are brought under control, there is apparently no necessity for making special efforts to control them. These have been the cause of so much distress, restlessness and discomfort for the mind, and thorough it for the Atma of the creature. Once the mind is controlled, the body would automatically be controlled. The Raaj Yoga, which deals primarily with the control of the mind, ultimately leads to the state of Samadhi.]

130. A person practicing Raaj Yoga has easy access to Vairagya (a sense of detachment and renunciation for the deluding material world of sense objects, along with its sensual pleasures and material comforts) as well as Vivek (wisdom, common sense and erudition).

Lord Vishnu is the one who is Maha Yogi (the great ascetic who is accomplished and self realised). He is a personification of all the Bhuts (the primary elements of creation) and one who does great Tapa (i.e. he does great penances, observes austerities, keeps stern religious vows and generally suffers for the welfare of others). [Refer verse no. 2.] (130).

131. For a person who has stepped on the spiritual path called 'Tattva Marg'¹ to reach his spiritual destination can see (visualise) that supreme and excellent Purush (i.e. the unmanifested Supreme Being in his manifested cosmic and all-inclusive form of the Viraat Purush known as Lord Vishnu) as a lighted lamp².

What a great irony it is that the man feeds himself (by drinking milk) from the same breast (of his mother) that he presses to derive immense sensual pleasure (during sexual encounters with his partner)³. [See verse no. 132 below in this context.] (131).

[Note—¹The *Tattva Marg* is the spiritual path that is business like and does not take one along a circuitous route to one's spiritual destination. It is a path that leads straight to one's spiritual goal. It's a philosophy that relies on to-the-point, well researched, clinically precise, empirically proven, effective and practical approach to spirituality and proven methods for reaching the citadel of spiritual elevation that culminates in liberation and deliverance of the soul from the continuous cycle of birth and death, and ensuring its emancipation and salvation for good. It is the eclectic spiritual way which is based on correct, proven and precise spiritual knowledge and its judicious and practical application which can fine tune one's approach to the actual and profound spiritual truths and reality as opposed to apparent or assumed truths and reality which are more often misleading and like a spiritual quagmire. It is the basic and essential path that any wise, erudite and sagacious aspirant would like to follow if he does not wish to waste his precious time and energy on debating as to which is the correct and effective way for spiritual elevation and realisation of the ultimate Truth that would provide him with final liberation and deliverance from this material world of falsehoods, delusions and entrapments. It is the noble path that would liberate the soul from the cobweb of birth and death and their accompanying horrors and pains, and lead him by the hand to the high ground of enlightenment and self-realisation from where the spiritual seeker stands to see clearly and witness first hand the presence of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being.

²The 'lighted lamp' is a metaphoric way of saying that against the background of a dark and foreboding world full of miseries and sorrows, of falsehoods and delusions, of myriad doctrines and philosophies that create a web of confusions and consternations that are tantamount to an all-covering veil of darkness that engulfs the spiritual aspirant from all sides, if he is wise and erudite enough to follow the correct path called the 'Tattva Marg' steadily without allowing himself to be confused in anyway, then he becomes fortunate enough to have a divine and reassuring vision of the Lord as the lamp of hope and salvation just like a ship caught in the choppy waters of a stormy sea observes the beacon of the lighthouse. The divine vision of the light of the Lord is very reassuring; it indicates his august presence and it removes all forms of symbolic darkness that have been engulfing the spiritual traveler from all the sides, such as the darkness induced by ignorance, delusions, various worldly faults and taints etc. This light, by removing the

fearsome darkness, cheers his heart and encourages him to move ahead with renewed zeal and vigour towards his chosen spiritual goal and speedily reach it. This goal is his spiritual emancipation and salvation, his liberation and deliverance from the fetters that had been shackling his self or his Atma, the pure conscious 'self', for many births and many generations. Once the light is visible at the end of the road, he races forward; previously he was moving slowly because he had to grope in the dark. This divine and sublime vision of the Lord as a lighted lamp is a sign that he has almost reached his goal, and the destination that the soul has been searching and yearning for countless generations and numerous births, is finally at hand.

³This is a remarkable observation. A man is so foolish that he forgets the reality and gets deluded by circumstances and their false charms. He forgets that the breast is provided by the Lord as a vessel or container to store the much-needed milk to feed the infant creature, and not as an instrument of deriving sexual gratification from it. The same breast is subjected to two different treatments, it assumes two opposite roles and appears to be different in two different contexts for the same man, for as a child he had fed from it and had even pressed it while suckling milk from it, while the same man does the same thing as an adult but his perception changes. There is a verse in Yagyavalkya Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 17, dealing with the very concept of how the breast of a woman should not delude a man by its illusive charm. It says—"The breast of a woman severed from her body and lying unattended in a cremation ground, or lying randomly at any other place, is fed upon by stray dogs as if they were ordinary dog-feed or lump of meat".

Thus we observe how the same thing is seen differently by three different people when viewed by them from different angles and perspectives. The child sees the breast as the pitcher filled with the life sustaining sweet milk, the elixir of life for it. The lustful man sees it as an instrument to satisfy his sensual and carnal desires. The ascetic and a renunciate monk see it is a lump of flesh lying on the gross inane body which is eaten by stray dogs.

The basic object does not change; the basic truth about the breast that it is an instrument provided by Mother Nature to feed the infant child till it is able to take care of its self remains the same, but the apparent differences of how it is treated and viewed persist. Even those who are well aware of this anatomical fact that it is as much part of the female body as her anus still wish to enjoy the sensual gratification derived from this lifeless lump of flesh that is fed upon by stray dogs in the cremation ground. This is an ideal example of how a man gets deluded and is overcome by ignorance about the real sense and purpose of anything, of how he can be misguided if the same thing is seen under the wrong light. This is an indirect way of explaining what constitutes the Tattva Marg—i.e. the proper and correct way of looking at certain thing by concentrating one's attention on the basic and truthful essence of it, the underlying truth and reality behind it, instead of getting deluded and misled by its charming exteriors and superficial appearances, or by the myriad of ways it is being interpreted and described by numerous people creating a vortex of confusions that is most perplexing and mortifying for the aspirant.]

132. A creature continues to move in the same cycle of birth and death; it continues to oscillate to and fro from one birth to another. A woman who is mother in one birth becomes a wife in another. Similarly, one woman who is one's wife in one birth becomes his mother in another (132).

133. A man who is someone's father in this life becomes his son in the next birth, and vice versa. In this way, this cycle of birth and death in this world is like the water-wheel used to water the farmer's field (133).

134-135. It is in this endless cycle that the creature continuous to move indefinitely, taking uncountable number of births as uncountable types of creatures that roam on the surface of earth in this world.

There are said to be three worlds¹, three Vedas², three Sandhyas³, three Swars⁴, three fires⁵, three Gunas⁶. [Refer Dhyān Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 36.]

Every thing in existence, including those that are metaphorically represented by these triads of creation as mentioned here, is included in the three imperishable letters (of OM)⁷; nothing exists outside of it. Hence, the wise ascetic should meditate upon and study the mystical and esoteric effect of these three letters as well as the half-syllable called 'ArdhaAkchar'⁸ on his spiritual progress (134-135).

[Note—¹The *three worlds* are the terrestrial, the celestial and the nether.

²The *three Vedas*, which are repositories of eternal knowledge, are the Rig, the Sam and the Yajur.

³The *three Sandhyas* are the three periods of time when one phase of the day meets the other and when the three sacramental prayers are said; they are the morning Sandhya done at dawn when the night meets the day, the midday Sandhya done at noon when the sun moves from one quarter of the sky to the other, and the evening Sandhya done at dusk when the day again meets the night.

⁴The *three Swars* are the basic vowel sounds in Sanskrit, and they are the following—the basic vowel sound that is made in the throat with the mouth open, such as the first alphabet letter 'A' (अ) as the article 'a' in English grammar (e.g. *a* man), the sound produced by opening the mouth wide open such as the second alphabet 'Aa' (आ) as in the word 'rather', and the sound made when the lips are in the form of a spout of a kettle as when pronouncing the alphabet 'O' (ओ) as in *oracle*.).

⁵The *three aspects of fire* are said to be the following—the terrestrial fire that sustains life on the earth, the fire of the heavens which is used by the Gods, and the fire of the nether worlds or hell which is used to punish sinners.

⁶The *three Gunas* are the three characteristic qualities inherently present in the creature. These three basic qualities or Gunas determine its nature, habits, temperaments and inclinations which in turn decide the behaviour, personality and outlook of each individual creature in this world. These three are briefly the following—(a) *Sata Guna* is the best quality present in a creature and it is marked by a predominance of auspiciousness, righteousness, virtuousness and noble qualities. (b) *Raja Guna* is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, desires, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, desire to sustain etc. All these pertain to this materialistic world, and they create an inherent affinity in a creature towards the material world of sense objects and their enjoyments rather than the world of spiritualism. (c) *Tama Guna* is the third quality which is the meanest and basest of the three types of qualities in a creature. It is marked by evilness, perversions and sinfulness. It is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, leading him to such negative traits as sins, vices, perversions, greed, avarice, haughtiness, pride, lust, attachments, yearnings, intoxication, wild behaviour, promiscuity, evils, utter disregard for anything which is righteous, ethical and noble etc.

⁷The *three letters* which stand for an entity that is imperishable are A, U and M, and pronounced together in this sequence they produce the sound equivalent of the eternal word OM which is the sublime ethereal sound form of the imperishable and supreme transcendental Brahm.

⁸The fourth *half syllable* is the letter 'O' which comes between 'A' and 'U'. It is called half-letter or syllable because it is in silent mode and has no distinct sound of its own in the pronunciation of the word OM. It blends with all the other three letters and acts as a bridge between them.]

136-139. Everything in existence is strung together or held together by these three letters (of OM representing the supreme Brahm). They act like the common thread running through the beads of a rosary or the flowers of a garland holding the independent units together and giving the creation its formal meaning and shape. [This is because the creation has so astounding variation that no two units of it are similar. There must be something to hold such a vast array of diversities together and prevent the entire edifice from disintegrating and scattering around. The bonding factor and the only one common denominator in such a diverse world is the presence of Brahm. And the word OM consisting of the three letters A, U and M is like the symbolic thread that keeps the garland made of a large variety of flowers in place and prevents the flowers from scattering.]

The entity implied and referred to by these three letters is the eternal and imperishable Truth of creation that is Absolute and is known as Brahm or Pranav. It is the supreme stature that the spiritual aspirant aims for and endeavours to reach, it is a most exalted state of being that which is truthful and eternal, and it is called the 'Param Pada', i.e. the supreme spiritual attainment or achievement. [This supreme spiritual stature is realisation of the truth about the 'self' as a personification of the pure and truthful 'consciousness', as an embodiment of wisdom and enlightenment, as well as the fact that it is the same as the cosmic 'Self' or the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm.]

This eternal 'absolute truth' (known as Brahm) pervades throughout the creation in a universal and uniform manner. It submerges, drenches and soaks the entire creation; it wafts and warps through it most subtly, imperceptibly and unseen just like the presence of fragrance in a flower, butter and fat in milk, oil in the sesame seed, and gold in its ore.

It is said that a symbolic lotus flower exists in the subtle heart of the creature. The head of this flower faces downwards but its stem is erect. In the center of it is the spot where the creature's Mana¹ is located. [Refer Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 33.]

During meditation on the supreme Truth called Brahm represented by the word OM, when the breath is exhaled, i.e. when Rechak is done, the sound produced is equivalent to the first letter 'A' of the triad of three imperishable letters representing that imperishable Truth. That is, the letter 'A' of the three-letter word OM is being said. In the context of the lotus-like heart and the Mana inherently present in it as its integral part, this letter 'A' represents the vital forces of life present inside the body of a man as well as his Mana representing his subtle heart along with its inherent emotions, sentiments and desires. They are manifested when the man makes the most primitive form of sound in the throat, the sound equivalent of the letter 'A' which is the first letter of the divine and ethereal sound OM².

The subtle lotus present in the heart is literally pierced through or ruptured by the second letter 'U' of the ethereal divine word OM³.

Finally when the exhalation is complete, the mouth is closed, and the continuous humming sound heard is equivalent to the third letter 'M' of the word OM. The cosmic Naad is heard in this stage because its sound is very much alike this sound of OM with a closed mouth. [It is a resonating, reverberating and grave sound of high density that vibrates through the brain and heart of the practitioner. Nothing else is heard against the background of this sound which drenches the ascetic like the sound emanating from the ocean at high tide which comes roaring in and sweeps the man standing on its coast in one sweeping wave.]

The Ardha Maatraa or the half syllable (which symbolises the subsiding of these sounds and also the link between any two of them) is pure and uncorrupt like crystal⁴. It has no particular form and sound specific to it. At the stage when it is heard, the ascetic is deemed to have reached a state of bliss and ecstasy that no corruptions and worldly faults anymore can taint him. It literally destroys his sins and their evil consequences (136-139).

[Note--¹This *Mana* is the emotional and sentimental aspects that control the functioning of the subtle aspects of the heart. It determines as to which things the heart would get attracted to and be infatuated with, and which it would treat with a sense of neutrality and even disdain. The Mana is usually regarded to be the subtle aspect of the mind also that controls such functions paying attention and remembering something. But we will observe here that the heart plays an all-important role, because unless the heart is interested in anything and gets involved in it, the mind alone would not be able to fix its attention on that subject for any length of time. A coordinated effort of the subtle mind and subtle heart are collectively called the Mana.

²When a man becomes emotionally aroused, or when his heart wants something or agrees with something, the sound that expresses it is equivalent to the sound of 'A' made in the throat, indicating the emotions of 'aye' or 'yeah' or 'yes' or 'oh'.

³This can be visualised in the example of the kettle with a spout. When the water inside is heated, the steam escapes out through the spout, making a subtle hissing sound. In the present case of Yoga, the heated vital airs rise up the body from its lower half and enter the heart through the stem of this lotus enroute to the head. Since the lotus is bent at its neck and facing downwards, thereby blocking the passage of the wind, it punctures a hole through it and moves upwards. It makes a hissing sound while escaping through it, which is compared with the second letter 'U' of the word OM.

⁴It must be noted here that the atoms of quartz crystals are known to vibrate and emit very subtle electrical impulses which are harnessed in quartz watches and other electronic instruments. The same thing probably happens here. The subtle electric energy present inside the heart not only keeps it beating normally while the ascetic meditates but also enhances the vibrations produced by saying OM silently. The resonance produced by these two sounds, i.e. the beating of the heart and the silent repetition of the Mantra OM, overlap each other and their frequencies are greatly enhanced, thereby multiplying their effect. As a result what was previously a subtle sound gradually becomes a roar like a ferocious ocean or the rumbling of a train passing over a bridge at night. This the 'Naad' heard by the ascetic.

The concept of 'Ardha Maatraa, has been elaborated upon in Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 9, and Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 17, 36, both of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

140-141. A wise and erudite man who does Yoga in the way described in this Upanishad is empowered to obtain Mukti, or find liberation and deliverance for himself. Even as a

tortoise withdraws all its limbs and head in its shell, the ascetic who practices Yoga as described here closes all the exit points in the body, called the nine doors¹, through which the vital winds could escape when pressure is exerted on them. As a result, finding all escape routes blocked, the air is forced to move up in the body (140-141).

[Note—¹The nine exit points in the body, called the doors, through which the air could make its escape are the following—two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, and one urethra. Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, 3/18.]

142. Just like an oil lamp kept inside a hollow pitcher remains steady and lights up the whole inside of the pitcher, the self-illuminated consciousness is witnessed during the state of Kumbhak when the air is held inside the body. [In other words, when the mind is totally focused on meditation and free from all external disturbances, the ascetic is able to witness the presence of the eternal spark of divinity inside his own self in the form of his own Atma which is pure consciousness and as pure as crystal.]

In this Yoga, when all the nine doors are closed, the perfect silence is witnessed and the only entity that remains inside the body is the essence known as the Atma.

This is how this Upanishad has described Yoga. Amen! (142).

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(IV—J) Akchu Upanishad (Canto 2)

This Upanishad is dedicated to the Sun God and has two parts. In the first part, sage Sankriti has prayed to the Sun God and asks him to show the world true light. The Sun is a visible manifestation of the glorious divinity, the radiant splendour and stupendous magnificence of the supreme transcendental Brahm. By praising the Sun God one is actually paying his obeisance to the Supreme Being who has revealed himself as this God. There is an Upanishad especially dedicated to the Sun God, called the Surya Upanishad, and it appears as the 17th Upanishad of the fifth volume in this series dealing with the Upanishads of the Atharva Veda.

In the second part, the Sun God describes to the sage the metaphysical knowledge of this Brahm, called the Brahm Vidya, and emphasises that Yoga is the true and effective means to realise this Brahm. The path that leads to Brahm-realisation has seven distinct signs or stages, called the ‘Seven Bhumikas of Brahm Yoga’. Refer also to Varaaha Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. Each Bhumika marks a distinct stage or step of enlightenment, and they have been elaborately described in part two of this Upanishad. These seven stages are listed in the way of ordinal numbers, with the first indicating the preliminary or the preparatory stage, and the seventh number marking the ultimate and highest spiritual order which is equivalent to Brahm-realisation. The distinctive characteristics of each stage have been clearly brought out in a beautiful way in this Upanishad.

Since the focus of this book is on the theme of “Yoga”, hence only Canto 2 of this Upanishad is hereby narrated; Canto 1 is skipped.

Canto 2

1. Next, sage Sankriti said to the Sun God—‘Oh Lord! Please preach me on ‘Brahm Vidya’, or the knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Brahman.’

The Sun God replied—‘Oh Sankriti! I shall now narrate to you the ‘Tattva Gyan’, i.e. the rarest and most eclectic of knowledge related to the essential philosophy pertaining to Brahman and the Atma, and described as the basic tenets of metaphysics and spiritualism. Listen carefully, because by becoming enlightened about this knowledge you shall become ‘Jivan Mukta’, i.e. obtain liberation and deliverance for your soul even while you are still alive and retain your gross body with which you can go about your normal work in this world (1).

[Note—The concept of *Brahm Vidya* has been the chief subject of discussion of a number of Upanishads, especially the Kaivalya Upanishad, Brahman Upanishad, and Brahman Vidya Upanishad dealing with the Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda.

The concept of *Jivan Mukti* or spiritual liberation and deliverance, or emancipation and salvation of the soul while the aspirant is still alive has been elaborately described elsewhere in the Upanishads, notably the Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/4/3-4; 2/3/6-7; 2/4/5-6; Paingalo-panishad, 3/5; Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 12, 43-47; and Mukti-panishad, Canto 2 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 2 of Atharva Veda tradition; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-32 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

2. You should cultivate the greatest of serenity, dispassion and equanimity by treating all living beings as ‘one’, and you should have no sense of duality between them and your own self (because essentially all are one single non-dual Atma that has revealed itself in all the myriad forms that are seen in this visible creation). [In other words, you should forget about the notion of ‘he’ and ‘me’, or of ‘his’ and ‘mine’.]

You should be convinced that all are, in their essential and basic form, an entity that has no birth (because it is imperishable and infinite), is peaceful and calm, is without an end (because it is infinite), is unwavering, constant and steady, is imperishable, unchanging and eternal, and is pure consciousness personified.

When you develop the level of wisdom and erudition that would enlighten you about this basic knowledge behind existence and the form that this creation has taken, the knowledge which is called ‘Tattva Gyan’ (i.e. the knowledge of the essentials, the knowledge of the fundamental principles of metaphysics and spiritualism, the knowledge of the basic tenets that the Upanishads preach), you would become peaceful and calm. You should live a contented and tranquil life of joy and happiness with this enlightenment (2).

3. The ‘Avedan Yoga’ or the higher form of true Yoga¹ is the eclectic state of existence when one is not even aware of anything else except the existence of the pure consciousness in the world around him (i.e. as the Atma, whether in the form of the individual creature or as the cosmic power known as Brahman). It is the enlightened state of awareness when nothing else exists or matters for the spiritual aspirant except the Atma at his individual level and the supreme all-pervading cosmic Atma called the Parmatma at

the grander state of existence. It is the exalted state of spiritual existence when the mind is calmed down and its natural tendencies overcome to the extent that it is virtually rendered ineffective and unable to influence the aspirant any longer, being as good as eliminated or destroyed for all practical purposes. It is the state when there is an effortless and seamless blending of the individual soul with the cosmic Soul so as to establish an entity that is non-dual and uniform in every possible way.

So, when you have thus become spiritually enlightened and achieved the exalted state of self-awareness of the infinite divinity of your soul, you could continue to live in this world and perform your duties and carry on with your routine life without getting unduly perturbed and restless about anything, or getting involved in anything related to the delusions of the material world. You must be careful not to become careless in anything you do, and always be on the alert so that you do not fall in any kind of delusions that act as spiritual traps for the ordinary man who is careless and less diligent. You must be careful that neither are you mentally, emotionally and sentimentally involved in anything or deed that you do, nor are you too indifferent and careless about what you do so as to ruin the work done by you². [In other words, be careful and vigilant. Do anything in a dispassionate manner, thinking that it is your destined and designated duty to do certain things, but do not get mentally, emotionally or sentimentally attached with either the deeds or their results. This way you would be doing them diligently but with a sense of un-involvement, thereby doing them with the best of your abilities but remaining free from their attendant headaches such as the anxiety related to their results which might cause you fear of suffering from their bad effects or getting unnecessary excited about their expected good results.] (3).

[Note--¹*Avedan Yoga* may be defined as a sincere effort made by a spiritual aspirant to do everything possible to bring about a seamless union between his individual soul with the supreme cosmic Soul of creation. Due to misconceptions and delusions, his soul appears to have obtained a separate identity from the cosmic universal Soul, and the main thrust of Yoga is to remove this false and illusionary distinction and dichotomy between them and instead restore the original uniformity and universality of the soul. The ultimate aim of such spiritual aspirants is to merge their individual self with the universal Self known as the supreme transcendental Brahm in the language of the Upanishads. Since the type of Yoga described in this Upanishad does not entail any hardships for the practitioner as is usually the case with other forms of Yoga involving arduous and most difficult exercises involving various stern Asanas, Mudras and Bandhas, it becomes a relatively easier option to achieve the same goal as the latter. It basically involves the training of the mind to gradually remove itself from its involvement with the material and artificial world and instead turn inwards to see the reality of the pure consciousness hidden in one's own bosom. It inspires the mind and intellect to become concentrated and devote its energy and potentials in acquiring the truthful knowledge about one's self and the reality of existence as propounded and enunciated in the scriptures by studying them deeply under proper guidance of a wise and experienced teacher. This learning should then be implemented in one's daily life and become a part of one's routine personality instead of just remaining a perfunctory knowledge acquired to gain popularity, money and fame.

The first stage described in verse nos. 4-9 is the preliminary stage when one is acquainted with the necessary eligibility requirements of this Yoga. Once the aspirant is ready, he is initiated into the second stage when he is expected to take the shelter of a learned teacher and guide who would kind of hold his hand and become his mentor. It

also narrates the benefits that the aspirant gets, such as his ability to distinguish between the right and the wrong.

It is the mind that is at the center of all thought processes. It is the mind that creates this world because first it becomes 'aware' of it, then gets 'attracted' by its charms, and finally gets 'hooked' to it so much so that it starts hallucinating and imagining things that actually do not exist. But when the aspirant has been successful in training his mind by doing meditation, thereby stopping it from paying any attention to this world, the efforts of the mind can then be diverted to nobler pursuits. Since the mind has a natural tendency to remain in a perpetual state of flux, without resting for a moment, it is imperative for any spiritual aspirant to divert it to some constructive work because if it is left to its own device and remains unattended, it would automatically swerve towards the world and its artificial but most alluring charms. Meditation and contemplation techniques are meant for focusing the mind towards the inner self instead of the outside world. Once the mind turns inwards, the outside world ceases to exist as far as the individual is concerned, and all the disturbances that arise from the latter would naturally be eliminated. The result would be a sense of profound serenity and calmness that would surround the aspirant like an all-enveloping veil of peace and contentedness, because all his worldly desires and wants, all his passions and yearnings, all the causes for his getting attracted towards the world and getting hooked to its charms would lose their meaning, importance and essence.

The purpose of Yoga is to bring about a harmony between apparently separate units of creation which often work at odds with each other though they are fundamentally different aspects of the same thing. When the aspirant is able to understand the basic principle that the same Atma prevails uniformly in this creation in all the living beings, when he understands that all forms of deeds are actually done by the gross body and not the Atma, that it is the mind that is the creator of all sorts of attachments and distresses pertaining to this world which is however artificial and delusory like the mirage seen in the hot desert, he would develop a profound sense of indifference and equanimity. He would deem to have controlled his mind, because it is the mind that is at the root of all thinking processes and imaginations, it is the mind that weaves its own cobweb and gets entangled in its own creation.

²Since you have risen to a higher level of wisdom and enlightenment, since you have realised what the 'truth' is and confident of yourself in this matter, it is expected of you that mundane matters and artificial things of this delusory world that normally act like a quagmire for ordinary persons or an entangling cobweb for them would not have the strength to delude you and trap you in their ever-expanding vicious tentacles, pulling you down back in the bog from which you have already extricated yourself after great effort by inculcating spiritual virtues, by acquiring the great knowledge about the Atma, and becoming aware of the ultimate goal of life as preached in the tenets of metaphysics and spiritualism. You should be vigilant from falling or slipping back into the deep and dark pit of ignorance, or getting enticed by the deceptive sweet charms of this falsehood once you have managed to extricate yourself from their tight embrace. You must be wary of the evil design of this cunning monster that would first entice you with tall promises, and once you get close enough he would devour you. You must ensure that whatever progress you have already made is not nullified by any single misstep on your part, whether advertently or inadvertently for you might not get a second chance at rectification.]

4-5. [The first sign or preliminary symptoms of this higher form of Yoga are the following--] As one progresses ahead in the path of true Yoga (which would ultimately bring about the union between his own self and the supreme transcendental Brahm by

making him enlightened and self-realised), his inner self gradually distances itself from all thoughts pertaining to this world and stops having any Vasanas related to it. [That is, when a spiritual aspirant progresses in the path of spiritual enlightenment, all worldly passions, lust, desires, yearnings and longings are shed off in a gradual manner. He develops a sense of total detachment, indifference and dispassion towards them.]

The aspirant does noble, auspicious and righteous deeds as a routine matter, without getting emotionally involved in them and neither hoping to reap any personal rewards from them. He abhors the way ignorant and stupid people get engrossed in worldly deeds, remaining submerged in deriving pleasure and comfort from this material world and gratifying the natural instincts of their sense organs.

He does not allow himself to do cheap talk and gossip about someone's personal secrets to which he is privy. He does not get involved in tattling and back-biting or betraying the trust of others that they have reposed in him.

Shunning all these misdemeanours, he prefers to remain straightforward and upright in his dealings and deeds done by him in the day-to-day life (4-5).

6. He does those merciful, compassionate, kind and gracious deeds and takes such actions that do not harm anyone in the least, or make them unnecessarily excited, agitated or perturbed by any one of his deeds or actions.

He is always wary of doing sinful acts and remains careful to avoid doing anything that is considered unworthy, unholy, inauspicious and unrighteous.

He does not have any longings for or wish to acquire any material objects of this world that would satisfy the lust for gratification of the sense organs and their desire for obtaining pleasures and comforts from these objects. [That is, he does not want anything pertaining to this material world of sense objects. He does not seek material comfort and pleasures.] (6).

7. He speaks in a tongue that is naturally sweet and pleasant, which is full of love and compassion. [That is, he never uses harsh words for anyone and neither does he speak anything, directly or indirectly that would cause pain to others.]

His words are not only sweet and pleasant but also tuned in accordance with the proper laws and codes prevalent from time to time and suitable to the present circumstances as well as for the person for whom they are meant. [That is, he speaks carefully words of wisdom after giving due thought to what he is speaking. He does not shoot off his tongue aimlessly, and recklessly speak in an irresponsible manner. He fine tunes his words according to the audience and the circumstances in which they are spoken or would be applied or interpreted. The same group of words would have different effects when spoken under different circumstances and to different groups of people. So he weighs all the pros and cons before speaking. He realises that speech is a manifestation of the great Goddess called Saraswati, and therefore should be used with the greatest care so that nothing is said which demeans or insults the exalted stature and nature of this divine Goddess.] (7).

8. He should very sincerely endeavour to have contact with good people from all walks of life, and inculcate their noble values in his deeds, speech and thoughts. He should also alongside study good books and scriptures on a daily basis and try to access them from

wherever they are available. [This would help him to improve himself in a general way. Good company and good books are the best means to improve oneself.] (8).

9. The state of existence as described above is called the first stage or milestone in the path of spiritual enlightenment that is the ultimate aim of Yoga. Only those who are sincerely interested in crossing this huge ocean-like world of entanglements and delusions opt for such path and give priority to giving thought to following the advice given herein. [Others would rather spend their time enjoying the material comforts and pleasures of this deluding and entrapping world of ignorance and artificiality, and remain contented in whirling around in an endless cycle of birth and death with its attendant miseries and sorrows. They would not like to find a way out of this predicament of the soul because, in their utter spiritual ignorance, they think that their 'self' is the gross body instead of the pure consciousness known as the soul, and that this world is the real thing and therefore one should, and is entitled to, enjoy to the hilt its material comforts and the pleasures of its sense objects.] (9).

10. A person who thinks in this noble and auspicious way and shows the above eclectic signs of specially-gifted spiritual inclinations is regarded as more fortunate, enlightened and wise amongst his peers.

He graduates to the next (second) stage of enlightenment as his thoughts become more and more mature and focused, and his intellectual ability to deeply analyse the various aspects of spiritualism gets more robust and effective (10).

11. In this next stage (i.e. second stage), he takes the shelter and refuge of such persons who are acclaimed as experts in this spiritual field and are able to very clearly and articulately explain the intricate meaning of various scriptures such as the Srutis and Smritis (i.e. the Vedas, Upanishads and Purans), who are well-versed in the laws of morality, ethics and propriety, and who can correctly show and guide the aspirant on the path of Dharna and Dhyan (auspicious belief and meditation). [That is, in the second stage of one's spiritual progress, the aspirant should take the shelter of a wise and self-realised Guru who is a teacher, moral preceptor and guide. This would help him to move further ahead on his spiritual path under proper guidance. This would also help him to remove all his misgivings, fears and misunderstandings. Should he face any problems, he would have a mentor to look up to who would not only remove any such unforeseen spiritual hurdles but also keep him encouraged to move ahead in spite of initial hiccoughs. This Guru would act like his guardian and patron angel who would be only too pleased to see his ward shine and acquire success in his spiritual endeavours.] (11).

12. By diligence and focused attention, by sincerity and steadfastness of purpose, by proper application of the mind and intellect, by having firm faith and conviction, and by steadily moving ahead undeterred on his spiritual path the aspirant becomes an expert in understanding the different aspects of all the things in this world, and in distinguishing between the truth and the false.

Becoming well-versed in the principles enunciated by the scriptures which are worthy of hearing and paying attention to, and having inculcated the correct knowledge of what they say and having understood the profound implications of their teachings, he

is able to determine what the righteous duty that ought to be done by one is, and what is not to be done and therefore should be avoided (12).

13. His mind and attention are not at all affected or influenced by such worldly negative tendencies as having Mada (arrogance and hypocrisy), Abhimaan (pride, ego and undue self importance) Maatsarya (envy, jealousy and malice), Lobh (greed, rapacity, yearning and lust) and Moha (delusions, attachments, attractions etc. that pertain to this material world). He is free from them.

If he finds that even inadvertently and involuntarily he is involved in this external world or his natural inclinations are pulling him towards this world of material comforts and sensual pleasures, he should immediately take remedial action by shaking it off like a serpent who abandons his cuticle without any difficulty and qualms (13).

14. A wise aspirant who inculcates these eclectic values is able to acquire the rarest and most secret of spiritual knowledge and achieve success in his spiritual endeavour by the coordinated help that is available to him by way of access to knowledge contained in the scriptures (which act like a constant ready reckoner for him) as well as the expert and judicious guidance provided to him by his Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide) and other self-realised and enlightened men who are well-versed and experienced in this path. [That is, he has the scriptures for consultation, and in the event that he needs more clarifications he has the Guru and other acclaimed experts to guide him. All circumstances seem favourable for him and he should make the most out of it.] (14).

15. Then he enters the third stage of this Yoga. This is called 'Asansarg'—meaning to have no contact, relation, proximity, association, interaction and familiarity with anything pertaining to non-truth and non-spiritual. His condition becomes immaculate, clean and holy like a man who has changed into new and clean clothes, and then sits down on a seat of fresh flowers to relax or do something he wishes to do (15).

16. Being wisened and enlightened enough to become totally detached from this material world of sense objects and its deluding charms, such a spiritual aspirant should have firm faith in what the scriptures affirm and remain steadfast in his convictions. He should fix his mind on the wise teachings of the scriptures and follow them in letter and spirit.

He should live in solitude in hermitages of those who engage themselves in doing Tapa (observance of penances and austerities; sufferance for some noble and great cause requiring sacrifices) such as ascetics, sages and seers who live in secluded forests, spending his time in talking and discussing about the scriptures. [That is, he should spend his time constructively by delving deeper into the scriptures and thinking of nothing else except spiritual matters. The hermitages provide him with the right atmosphere conducive for this. This would have the effect of diverting his mind from matters of this world to matters concerning his spiritual welfare. This would also help him to gain peace and tranquility of the mind and heart, besides acquiring more knowledge enshrined in the scriptures from those who are well-versed in them.] (16).

17-19. He sits upon rocks and spends his life in observing strict norms of austerity and sufferance (so as to steer himself clear from all sorts of artificial comforts and pleasures

that his sense organs have become accustomed to while he was engrossed in this material world of sense objects by abstaining from all physical comforts and pleasures such as those obtained by using soft mattresses and quilts which would make him lazy and indolent and indulgent in self gratification, because the body has a natural inclination and urge to avoid sufferings and hardships, and instead prefers comforts and pleasures).

Such an enlightened man who is an ardent follower of the tenets of the scriptures lives in solitude in pleasant forests which give his mind and his inner self the much sought after eternal happiness, peace and tranquility. Having tasted the pleasure and charm of natural surroundings and enjoying their profound calming, exhilarating and spiritually uplifting effect on his self, he would then begin to abhor artificial and transient comforts and pleasures of the material world of sense objects in a natural way, without the use of any force and compulsion. He begins to enjoy the things that Nature provides him in abundance, and progressively begins to find them to be more and more naturally attractive and charming instead of the artificial attractions and charms that are the hallmarks of everything provided by this material world of sense objects. [That is, once he tastes the pristine and exhilarating nectar-like beauty of the forest and a life marked by great solitude and extreme carefree-ness from the worries of this world, he would then see the difference between this life and his earlier life when he was never at peace, was never rested as he was always worried about one thing or the other. The natural surroundings also have a profound positive effect on his all round general health and peace of mind, giving him the real bliss that he had for so long yearned for.]

Study of the scriptures and doing auspicious and righteous deeds helps one to develop a sense of wisdom and the ability to see things with the correct perspective.

By reaching this third stage of Yoga, he becomes wise and erudite in a natural way, and begins to observe the difference between the way he had seen the world earlier and the way he sees it now (17-19).

20. The Yoga described above, i.e. the 'Asansarg Yoga', has two dimensions. I shall narrate them, listen carefully. This Yoga is of two types—viz. 'Samanya' or ordinary, and 'Sreshtha' or special and exclusive (20).

21. [Verse nos. 21-24 describe the first type of Asansarg Yoga, i.e. the ordinary or common form of detachment and non-involvement obtained by a spiritual aspirant.]

'I am not the doer of anything, and naturally therefore neither am I the enjoyer nor the sufferer from the good or bad effects of the deeds done. I am totally free from all fetters, and am not the one who can be subjected to any obstacles or hurdles of any kind. I am under no compulsions as I am a free Spirit, and I am not bound to anything or anybody'—this way of natural thought is called the normal sign of Asansarg Yoga, i.e. a spiritual existence when the aspirant is not attached to and involved in anything or anybody in this world. He is not even concerned with his body and what it does, and therefore there is no question of his expecting any rewards from the deeds done by the latter. Since all relationships are limited to the physical body and not the soul, it naturally follows that such an enlightened person is not related to anybody or anything (21).

22. 'Everything that I face in this life is the result of the past deeds done in my previous life or according to the destiny destined for me by the creator, and therefore the happiness

and miseries that I am being subjected to in this life are not of my own creation and so why should I get overly worked-up or perplexed due to them’—this is the way such a man thinks and believes in (22).

23. ‘Accumulation of worldly objects of comfort and pleasure, hoarding of worldly assets and treasures that give material satisfaction and help in gratification of the senses portend great troubles for me and my spiritual welfare and are like a horrible disease which is better avoided and taken precaution against.

All attachments, relationships, unions and interactions that pertain to the world in any manner whatsoever result in the sorrow and grief of separation because all things in this material world are perishable and transient, coming to an end one day, voluntarily or involuntarily, which would result in grief and sorrows of separation when one is forced to abandon them either by way of death or by way of their own decay and destruction by passage of time.

All sorts of mental worries and agonies that engulf the creatures in this world are nothing but a sort of disease of the mind that is deluded and ignorant of the truth.’ (23).

24. ‘Everything that is present in this world is perishable and transient; they are mortal and devoured by the ferocious jaws of Kaal (death personified) in due course of time. Nothing is everlasting’.

The study of the scriptures and proper understanding of them inculcates profound wisdom that makes an aspirant becoming uninterested and detached from the world along with all its material objects and the various relationships that one is inclined to establish in this world. This is defined as common form of ‘Asansarg Yoga’ (24).

25-26. [Verse nos. 25-26 describe the second type of Asansarg Yoga, i.e. the higher or special form of detachment and non-involvement obtained by a spiritual aspirant.]

The next stage that is obtained by the aspirant after he has been fortunate enough to get close communion with enlightened and experienced peers, and has, as a result of this contact with them, become convinced that he is not the doer of anything in this world, that whatever he suffers from or enjoys is a carry-over from his past life or destined by the creator and not due to his own personal doing, is to become free from all mental agitations, restlessness, perplexities and worries as to what is happening now and what would happen in the future. In brief, he stops worrying at all in all matters. [This is an obvious deduction—because he never worries for anything at all and accepts them as and when they come his way, for he believes that everything is pre-destined for him and his worrying over them and losing sleep would not change anything at all, rather it would only give him more trouble and pain by way of mental agitation and worry for things over which he has no control. So he becomes calmed down and lets the things take care of themselves.]

Becoming free from all worries and not getting perplexed unnecessarily by the web of words (of the scriptures) and their so many interpretations, he develops a sense of profound serenity and detachment towards everything.

As a result, he becomes steady and silent by withdrawing himself from all external relationships and worldly involvements, and instead turns inwards. He sits in a virtual Aasan of regular Yoga in the sense that he has learnt to exercise control over his

sense organs and their natural tendency to be extrovert and restless, thereby remaining steady and unwavering in his state of detachment and its attendant bliss. He becomes calm, composed and tranquil, giving all restlessness and agitations a good bye. This posture gives him internal peace and tranquility on a perpetual basis.

This is called 'Sreshtha Asansarg Yoga'—or the best form of non-involvement with the world. It is the high level of detachment from and dispassion towards this world when one becomes silent and full of equanimity and fortitude. Such a man would remain unruffled and unmoved under any circumstance (25-26).

27. When the inner self of the aspirant is prepared to accept the blessed state bliss, ecstasy and contentedness obtained by turning inwards and away from all external falsehoods and delusions of this world, it acts like a fertile ground on which small sprouts of the plant that drips Amrit, which is the elixir of eternal life and immense happiness, takes a firm root. This stage marks the onset of the first Bhumika or sign that the aspirant is ready and prepared to move ahead on the path of Yoga leading to his ultimate realisation of the Truth and Reality of creation. It is the background on which the other signposts of his spiritual progress rest, because if this ground is not properly prepared, i.e. if he is not sincere to follow the path of self-realisation by observing the tenets of Yoga as described in this Upanishad, then all his other efforts would fall aside and crumble to pieces like a house build on weak foundation (27).

[Note—The concept of Bhumika has also been described in detail in *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 4 which is devoted to this concept for the most part of it, and Canto 5, verse no. 71-75 which lays stress on Yoga and draws a parallel with the three steps of Pranayam, such as Purak, Kumbhak and Rechak.]

28. As soon as the ground is prepared, i.e. as soon as the aspirant is mentally and emotionally prepared to follow the exclusive path of Yoga that would pull him away from this world and divert him towards his pure and truthful self, leading to his ultimate communion with the supreme Truth known as Brahm, the aspirant can confidently move ahead on his spiritual path and step on the other rungs of Yoga. That is, now he can achieve success in the second and third steps of the Yoga as described above (in verse nos. 10-26) (28).

29-31. The third Bhumika¹ or state of existence of a spiritual aspirant who follows the path of this special Yoga (as described in verse nos. 15-26) is ranked amongst the best stages of Yoga because now the aspirant has abandoned all his worldly inclinations and tendencies that have their origin in his inherent nature of having numerous passions, desires and yearnings pertaining to this world and its sense objects. This is achieved by him by exercising control not only over his own self by controlling the gross sense organs as well as the subtle mind-intellect complex of his body but also by having firm faith in the teaching of the scriptures and removing all doubts, confusions and perplexities by consulting his wise moral preceptor, the Guru, with whom he has constant contact. Besides this, he lives in a secluded place in a forest where there are no chances of this world being able to entice him with all sorts of charms that might act as a bait to trap him off-guard that would lead to his spiritual downfall.

In brief, during the third state of existence of his consciousness when he loses all attractions for the world and the latter no longer charms him or has any relevance for

him, an aspirant becomes oblivious of the existence of the external world and remains contented with his inner world of eternal bliss and peaceful existence. The material world with its myriad variations and ever changing nature ceases to matter for him. This in turn removes all the causes for perplexities and anxieties that normally submerge a person who is engrossed in the mundane affairs of the world. He becomes rooted in a state of constancy and uniformity where there is no sense of duality and dichotomy because nothing exists for him except his own 'self' (in the form of his pure consciousness; his Atma). His vision of existence undergoes a profound degree of metamorphosis—he begins to see oneness and non-duality in everything around him.

When this stage of total uniformity of existence is achieved, when there is a universal sense of non-duality and oneness all round, he is able to accept this world as a dream. [This is because all the different things that are seen in one's dream are false and imaginary and everyone known it as a matter of fact. When one sees a dream he remains unaffected by it and his body continues to lie motionless in sleep, motionless even though he might be an active participant in the events of the dream. Likewise, a self-realised aspirant who has understood the fact that this world is like a dream continues to live in it and do his duties in it as destined for him, but remains completely detached from them at the physical, mental and emotional levels; his 'true self' is totally unruffled, unmoved or unaffected by anything that the body does in this world. This helps him to remain calm and indifferent not only to the deeds and their results but also to this world in which the deeds are done and in which all the sense objects are located. In spite of all the turmoil and upheavals of mundane life, he remains markedly calm and poised.] (29-31).

[Note—¹The term *Bhumika* means the stages of development of wisdom; the background, characteristics, qualities, traits, attributes or virtues that helps one to become spiritually wise and enlightened. The eclectic concept of what actually are these Bhumikas has been explained in Varaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 4, in great detail.]

32-33. The first three Bhumikas or stages or backgrounds of Yoga are like the waking state of consciousness, while the fourth Bhumika is like the dreaming state¹.

When he progresses ahead and enters the fifth state of existence called the 'Pancham Bhumika', his sub-conscious mind ceases to remain active and becomes quiet and dysfunctional—it metaphorically vanishes from sight like the dark clouds of the rainy season that vanish during the winter season. [The dark rain-bearing clouds rumble and thunder and let out streaks of violent lightening during the rainy season. But during the winters, the sky is absolutely clean and quiet. This is used to indicate the calmness obtained by the spiritual aspirant when his mind ceases to exert any influence upon him, and when he has completely withdrawn himself from all involvements with the body and the world. This is a state of extreme neutrality and non-alignment.]

In this state of existence, only the pure consciousness remains, and since the mind has been side-lined and rendered ineffective there is no question arising for any sort of doubts and confusions requiring clarifications by the aspirant (32-33).

[Note—¹The consciousness has five states of existence—the waking, the dreaming, the deep sleep, the Turiya, and post-Turiya called Turiyateet.]

34. The fifth Bhumika is likened to the deep sleep state of consciousness called 'Sushupta'. This is natural progression of the earlier state of consciousness (i.e. the

dreaming state) and is the state when the sense of non-duality is firmly established. All causes of restlessness and perplexities are laid to rest in this fifth state of Yoga (34).

35. In this fifth stage of Sushupta, the aspirant witnesses the fount of bliss sprouting out from his pure conscious self (because every other sort of distraction has been eliminated), and this experience gives him an extreme sense of blessedness and ecstasy (35).

36. Although he might interact with the external world but for all practical purposes he is submerged in his own self, remaining perpetually in a state of bliss and indifference to all external involvements. This gives rise to the impression that he is careless, indolent or plain inattentive to matters of the external material world. He appears to be weary and tired of this world; he looks as if he is sleepy and acts listlessly because he is not interested in its affairs. [This is because he is perpetually submerged in the bliss obtained in his own self, and the mundane duties of this world appear to be burdensome to him.] (36).

37. Acquiring expertise in this stage, the spiritual aspirant moves to the next higher state of existence, i.e. he enters the sixth Bhumika of Yoga called 'Turiya'. [In this state, the sense of blessedness and bliss becomes more robust and permanent. Though this state has been achieved in the Sushupta stage as well, but now the aspirant has transcended that state and risen higher. The earlier transient and fledgling state of Sushupta has now become permanent and robust in the sixth Bhumika. The degree of enlightenment in the Turiya state is many notches more than the earlier state. Now no cause can bring him back to the lower levels again.]

No Vasanas (worldly passions, lust, desires, yearnings and wants) have any trace in him any longer (37).

38. In this exalted state of transcendental existence, there is no notion of Sat or Asat, or of Ahankar and non-Ahankar. [That is, now the aspirant need not distinguish between what is true and what is not for the simple reason that he lives in a state of non-duality where only one Truth lives, and it is the pure consciousness residing in his own self. That is why also there is no question of having any kind of pride and ego because such negative notions have any relevance only when one is aware of the body and its relationship with other individuals who also have a body. When there are no two entities, when everything is one indivisible non-dual Soul, the question of me being superior to him does not arise, and therefore there is no role of ego and pride.]

In this way, he becomes extremely fearless and brave. [Because now he has no enemies or competitors for him that he needs to have a false sense of self respect or a pride that has to be preserved. All are one in his enlightened eyes. Again, since a wise and enlightened person has realised that it is the body that dies and not the soul, and that the soul is his true 'self' and not the body, he overcomes the perpetual fear of death that stalks all ordinary living beings.] (38).

39. When all the knots of the heart are untied (i.e. when all his spiritual fetters are broken and he is let off to freedom), the spiritual aspirant is said to be liberated and delivered in spite of his having a gross body and having to live in this world and do the duties

assigned to him by destiny. These knots of the heart act like shackles that tie a person to this body as well as the world and its material attractions, creating in him a sense of belonging and attachment, a sense of yearning and deep longing for the enjoyment of the material comforts and pleasures of this world along with the insatiable desire for obtaining gratification for the sense organs of the body. The heart impels him to have the tendency to enjoy them and remain engrossed in them, the tendency to cling to them and grieve from their separation. All these have a combined effect of creating an emotional fetter that shackle his Atma and prevent its liberation.

So, when these knots which are like a millstone around someone's neck are done away with, all his spiritual doubts, confusions and perplexities about what is the truth and what is not are eliminated, which is tantamount to his soul obtaining liberation and deliverance from ignorance and delusions.

Such a person is said to have obtained 'Jivan Mukti', i.e. the state of spiritual liberation and deliverance even while he is still alive in this world and has a physical body (as compared to the Videha Mukti when he sheds his mortal coil and obtains physical freedom from the fetters of the body and the horrible troubles of the world at the time of death). In this state he might remain in this world and go about his duties in a normal way, but at the emotional and sentimental level he is not involved in anything.

Thus, though he has not obtained physical liberation of the soul by the way of shedding the body as done at the time of death, called 'Nirvan' (emancipation and salvation) in the conventional terms, he is deemed to have obtained a state of exalted and divine existence that is equivalent to it and in no way less in its spiritual significance (39).

40. His condition can be compared to a lighted lamp which has a steady flame. After successfully living in this sixth state of existence (which is called Jivan Mukta state), he finally enters the last state, the seventh Bhumika of Yoga. It is called the 'Videha Mukta' state of the consciousness. [The word 'Videha' means without a body. It has two implications—one, it refers to the higher state of Jivan Mukta when the spiritual aspirant is not at all aware even of his own body so much so that if it is beaten or burnt alive he is not aware of this event. Second, it refers to the actual shedding of the physical body as in the case of death. In both the cases, the soul is liberated and its salvation and emancipation obtained.] (40).

[Note—The sixth state of Yoga is called Jivan Mukta, while the seventh state is called Videha Mukta.]

41-42. This most exalted and divine seventh Bhumika of Yoga is the pinnacle of spiritual achievements and it cannot be described by speech or words. This is like the outer periphery of all other Bhumikas of Yoga and marks the culmination of all Yoga efforts.

An aspirant should abandon all involvements with the world, with the body, and even too much entanglement with the scriptures. [This is not to construed as insulting the scriptures, for the hidden meaning is that once the objective of studying them is achieved, there is no point in reading them endlessly and discussing them forever just like the case when once a man passes out of college he need not read his text book daily except when he wishes to consult them when the need arises to do so and deemed necessary.]

He should instead spend more time and energy in implementing what he has learnt and experiencing the truth of the scriptures in practical terms by constantly practicing the tenets of Yoga on a regular basis.

The entire creation revealed in the form of Vishwa, Taijas and Pragya (corresponding to the three stages of existence, viz. the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleeping state that respectively involves the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body in this order as described in earlier verses as the first till the seventh state of Yoga) is nothing but the same non-dual supreme transcendental all-encompassing cosmic entity known as 'Omkar'. [The word Omkar refers to the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. The latter has no attributes but the first sign of its existence is available in the form of cosmic vibrations in the ether, known as Naad or Pranav. This Naad represents the energy of Brahm in a most subtle but vast, diffused and cosmic form. It is this energy that metamorphosed itself into other forms and helped the visible world to assume the structure that it has finally acquired.] (41-42).

43-48. There is no difference between the object of all spiritual pursuits and the pursuant himself because both are the same pure consciousness called the Atma.

The entire creation has been revealed from this one indivisible entity represented by the eclectic word OM. This word OM has three letters—viz. A, U and M. They correspond to the Vishwa (the gross body and its waking state of existence), the Taijas (the subtle body and the dreaming state of existence) [43], and Pragya (the causal body and the deep sleep state of existence) respectively.

As one prepares to enter the state of Samadhi (a transcendental trance-like perpetual state when one is totally engrossed in contemplating upon one's consciousness and remains totally oblivious of the surrounding world), he should deeply ponder on the great implication of this statement [44], and make efforts to merge the gross and the subtle with the pure consciousness.

He should accept the eclectic fact about the divinity of his 'self', that the most exalted and divine consciousness is his true nature and identity. [That is, 'he' is not the body which the world is accustomed to recognise as the identity of an individual, but something very high and pure in the form of consciousness. The body is visible but this consciousness is not, and that is one reason why the world cannot come to terms with it because it needs visible proof of everything to be convinced of its existence. But it forgets in the process that the body is perishable and the consciousness is not, besides the fact that without this consciousness being present in the body the latter would be worthless. This is the great delusion created by this world.]

With this firm conviction, he should contemplate thus—'I am the entity which is Nitya (eternal and imperishable; constant and steady), Shuddha (pure, immaculate and uncorrupt), Buddha (wise, erudite, self-realised and enlightened), Mukta (inherently liberated, delivered and emancipated), Sad (the true authority and Truth personified), Advaya (non-dual and one of its kind) [45], Parmanand Sandoha (a treasure of supreme and transcendental bliss and joy personified), Vasudeo (personified from of Lord Vishnu who is the Lord of creation, who is the supreme Brahm in his cosmic manifestation as the all-encompassing and all-pervading Viraat Purush from whom the rest of creation has emerged), and am an eclectic entity that has no beginning, no middle and no end (because the Atma is eternal, infinite, imperishable and ever present)'.

Since the world of delusions and falsehoods can give nothing but grief and miseries in its wake, right from its beginning thorough its present till its end [46], it is prudent and wise therefore, oh the sinless one, to abandon it and instead establish one's self in the Truth as described herein above.

Instead, think in these terms—'I am not deluded by the darkness of ignorance. I do not imagine anything unreal [47]. I am a personification of Anand—bliss and extreme happiness. I do not have any Mals—I do not have any sort of impurities, faults, taints and blemishes of any kind in this world. I am Shuddha—I am clean, pure and uncorrupt in every way. I am not visible to and comprehensible by the mind and speech—i.e. the mind cannot fathom my true form and nature, and the faculty of speech cannot find the right words to describe me. I am Pragyan Ghan—I am a treasury of wisdom, erudition, sagacity and enlightenment. I am indeed that Brahm who is personified Anand—who is a living embodiment of bliss, ecstasy and spiritual delight, who is beatitude and felicity personified'.

This is the teaching of this great Upanishad. Amen! [48]. (41-48).

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(IV—K) Tejobindu Upanishad (Canto 1)

This magnificent Upanishad is virtually like a citadel, a strong fort of the philosophy of 'Advaita Vedanta' which extols the eclectic philosophy of non-duality and uniformity in creation. It is the pivotal Upanishad of this philosophy, and can easily be likened to the crown jewel in the realm of Advaita Vedanta.

Like the Ishavasya and Keno Upanishads, this Upanishad also derives its name from the opening verses of Canto 1 which describe the source of all cosmic Tej, the magnificent divine powers and the stupendous dynamic energy of creation that springs forth from and is centered around one hypothetical point in creation known as the supreme transcendental Brahm. This 'point source' of all divinity and holiness is represented by the 'dot' placed on the symbol of Brahm which is represented by the word OM and its graphical depiction as the sign. It describes the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm in a very holistic manner.

The name of this Upanishad has two components—viz. 'Tej' meaning 'dynamic energy and radiance', and 'Bindu' referring to literally to the 'dot' or 'a point source of this energy and radiance'. The Tej is the cosmic energy and vitality that not only set the ball of creation rolling but also kept it rolling once it was set in motion, while the Bindu is the point source from where this energy has emanated and which is the central controlling Authority that overlooks the working of this creation. While the creation is the wheel, the Bindu is its hub and the Tej is the kinetic energy that keeps the wheel rotating.

There are six elaborate Cantos in this Upanishad. From the practical standpoint, this Upanishad has a profound positive value in today's world of depression and darkness. Its Cantos 2-4 are great tools that can be used for meditation purposes in order to remove one's mental depression and a sense of inferiority complex, a sense of

hopelessness, haplessness and helplessness that are so prevalent and marked in this competitive world today by kindling the positive energy latent in every individual by using the psychological power of 'auto-suggestion' in which a practitioner suggests to himself that he is good and surrounded by goodness, and all negativity are being removed from him and his surroundings.

For this purpose, the aspirant should first understand the meaning of the verses and then sit down calmly in a comfortable meditative posture, hum or mentally repeat the verses of Canto 2 and 3 one by one in order to first imbibe positive thoughts and draw in fresh constructive ideas about himself, to be followed by a holistic cleansing of the inner-self by purging of all negative thoughts by pondering upon the verses of Canto 4.

It is essentially a psychological process whereby one first tells himself 'I am good and auspicious, and I welcome these virtues in me with an open arm', and then following it up with 'I am not bad, and all badness in me are hereby eliminated, purged or expelled for good'. As is obvious, such exercises begin to show positive results very soon and are very helpful in a world ridden with negativity, overcome with depressing thoughts that hover over like darkened clouds that effectively obstruct sunlight, and a world where a creature lives in an environment full of artificiality, hopelessness, haplessness and helplessness.

In fact, meditation using this Upanishad is easier and has a greater practical value for a person than using the Mantra OM because he is able to relate himself more closely with the eclectic ideas expressed in the verses of this Upanishad to derive practical benefits from them in his day to day living by eliminating depressing thoughts and improving his outlooks not only about his own self but also about his surroundings, thereby making his life worth it. In the case of OM as a tool of meditation, and on the other hand it presents a rather difficult proposition for him as it is too abstract a concept and an ordinary person finds it hard to relate with its abstract philosophy in practical terms.

Canto 1 describes the symbolic location of the point where the supreme Brahm resides, and this pin-point of Divinity is called 'Tejobindu'—literally the spot endowed with miraculous 'Tej' or a dynamic fount of cosmic energy and light of knowledge and wisdom representing the stupendous powers and astounding potentials of the enigmatic supreme Authority of creation known as Brahm. It describes the qualities necessary in an aspirant to access this Tej and goes on to elaborately discuss in an excellent way the various principles of Yoga—such as Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pratyahar, Mulbandh, Pranayam, Dhaarna, Dhyana, Samadhi etc. in a very practical way with the perspective of spiritual enlightenment in its truest and purest form.

Cantos 2-3 are an exposition upon the grand virtues of Brahm as realised holistically by a self-realised spiritual aspirant. It is revealed in the form of an enquiry in this regard by Lord Kartikeya and answered by none other than Lord Shiva who is regarded the wisest God amongst the Trinity of Gods. It should be noted here that it was also Lord Shiva who had preached the profundity of the great maxims and axioms of the Vedas to sage Shukdeo in Shuk-Rahasya Upanishad.

These Cantos expound upon one of the great sayings of the Vedas—i.e. 'I am Brahm personified', and go on to enumerate the numerous glorious and divine virtues of this Brahm. They basically present the holistic view of the Upanishads that everything in existence, from the minutest to the most colossus, from the subtlest to the grossest, from

the invisible to the visible—all have the same universal, constant, immutable, indivisible and truthful entity known as their ‘soul’ present in them as a common unifying and binding force that unites them into one single whole known as ‘the creation’.

This unifying element is called ‘Chinmaya Brahm’ in Canto 2, the common denominator which is all-intelligence and the almighty Consciousness personified. This entity is like the sub-atomic particles, such as the electron, the proton and the neutron, without which the atom—which is at the core and the basic identity of all material things in this world—cannot exist. And this Chinmaya is qualified as ‘Anand’, the eternal fountainhead of beatitude and felicity. In other words, the realisation that everything in existence are fundamentally the same, the spiritual aspirant is filled with an overwhelming sense of fulfillment as his research for the ultimate ‘truth of life’ has been completed. He discovers that he himself is that ‘truth’ as much as his neighbour next door!

Cantos 3 repeatedly stresses the point that when the spiritual aspirant realises the fact that his true ‘self’ and truthful identity is not an ordinary humble being with a gross body but the most exalted and supreme cosmic Consciousness itself personified in this form that he achieves the highest post of spiritual endeavours, and this realisation, if it is honest and heart-felt, is the climax of his enlightenment and Brahm-realisation. This Canto enumerates the glorious virtues, the divine attributes and eclectic qualities that characterize this true ‘self’.

Canto 4 describes the two types of ‘Muktis’ called ‘Videha Mukti’ and the ‘Jivan Mukti’. The word ‘Mukti’ refers to the liberation and deliverance of the soul of the creature from ignorance and delusions, and its ultimate emancipation and salvation so that it does not have to come back and enter the cycle of birth and death in this mortal world. This is once again elaborately explained by Lord Shiva to his son Kartikeya (Shadaanan).

Canto 5 is a revelation of the divine and eclectic virtues of the Atma, the pure consciousness, along with the factors which distinguishes it from anything that is regarded as ‘non-Atma’. This subject is comprehensibly described by the learned sage Ribhu when asked to elaborate upon it by his disciple Nidagh.

Canto 6 finally sums up the divine and glorious virtues of the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm, as well as its representative the pure conscious Atma, as told by the great sage Ribhu to his disciple Nidagh. This Canto employs the unique methodology of establishing the falsehood of this world by citing countless instances of highly incredulous things and saying that if such highly absurd things can be true then the world could also be true. Refer verse nos. 73-99 of this Canto.

The high point of this Upanishad is the employment of the typical pattern of the Vedas to describe the supreme truth about Brahm, i.e. the process of negation known as Neti-Neti. This is very clear in Canto 4, 5 and in verse nos. 1-29 of Canto 6. Lest this negation process create any doubts about the authenticity of the omnipotent and omnipresent existence as well as the supreme transcendental and authoritative nature of Brahm, verse nos. 30 onwards of Canto 6 goes on to assertively declare what *is* Brahm in positive terminology as opposed to the negation pattern of the earlier verses which emphasise what is *not* Brahm.

The Kaivalya, Dhyan Bindu, Brahm Bindu, Brahm Vidya, Shwetashwatar, Sarwasaar and Shuk Rahasya Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition

complement and supplement the doctrines expounded and enunciated in this present Upanishad and ought to be read along with it to fully grasp the profundity of its teachings. Besides these, there are numerous other Upanishads which deal with the identical subject as done in the present Tejobindu Upanishad, such as for instance the Mahopanishad of the Sam Veda, the Atma Prabadh Upanishad of the Rig Veda, the Adhyatma and Tarsaar Upanishads of the Shukla Yajur Veda, and the Atmopanishad of the Atharva Veda to mention a few.

The universality of the Atma has been also the subject affirmed in the Holy Bible in its 1 Corinthians, 12/3-26.

Since our focus in this book is on the theme of “Yoga”, hence only Canto 1 is being narrated herein below, while the rest of the text is not included.

Canto 1

[Canto 1 describes the symbolic location of the point where the supreme Brahm resides, and this pin-point of Divinity is called ‘Tejobindu’—literally the spot endowed with miraculous ‘Tej’ or a dynamic fount of cosmic energy and light of knowledge and wisdom representing the stupendous powers and astounding potentials of the enigmatic supreme Authority of creation known as Brahm. It describes the qualities necessary in an aspirant to access this Tej and goes on to elaborately discuss in an excellent way the various principles of Yoga from the perspective of metaphysics—such as Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pratyahar, Mulbandh, Pranayam, Dhaarna, Dhyan, Samadhi etc. in a very practical way with the perspective of spiritual enlightenment in its truest and purest form. It describes what is true Mukti, enumerates the characteristics of a Brahm-realised person, and outlines the obstacles encountered by a spiritual aspirant in his path.

Special attention is to be paid to the following verses: 15-19, 25-27, 31-42.]

OM salutations! The ‘Bindu’ or dot, known as the Anuswar (‘’) in the Sanskrit language¹, placed on the top of the symbol for OM which is a synonym of Pranav, and which in turn is synonymous with the supreme transcendental cosmic Divinity known as Brahm) is a sign or symbol of cosmic ‘Tej’ (dynamic energy, light, heat as well as splendour, radiance, glory, magnificence) emanating from the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm².

To meditate upon this ‘dot’ is the best form of Dhyan (contemplation and focusing of the mind on some object that is to be diligently pursued and obtained). This Bindu (dot) is equivalent to the micro-fine, sublime and subtle Atma of this world (much like the invisible atom which is at the core of all molecular structures that determine the shape of everything that exists in this physical world, or a lighted wick of a candle placed in the center of a dark room).

It (i.e. the Atma represented by the Bindu) resides in the subtle heart of all the living beings in this world. It is like an invisible atom whose presence cannot be denied; it is most auspicious and a bestower of auspiciousness; it is inherently peaceful, calm and serene.

It has manifested itself in the three basic forms in which this creation exists—viz. in the gross, the subtle and the subtlest form as the cause of everything in existence³.

That is why it is regarded as the most enigmatic, incomprehensible and mysterious entity in this creation (1).

[Note—¹The Anuswar (‘’) Is a dot placed on the top of an alphabet in Sanskrit language to give a nasal sound as in ‘*sung* or *sum*’. Suppose it is placed above the consonant ‘Ra’, then the resultant letter becomes a ‘Beej Mantra’ or seed or root Mantra for certain deity, in this case it is Lord Ram, the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. This Beej Mantra is used in occult and ritualistic forms of worship such as invocations during fire sacrifices. The concept of a dot has been explained in note to verse no. 5 in the context of the ‘Chandra Bindu’ of this Canto below.

²This metaphysical phenomenon will be easily understood by way of a simple example. Suppose a lighted candle is placed in the center of a huge dark room or hall. When looked from a distance, the flame would appear to be like a dot of energy and light which spreads its radiance and light that cuts through the all-engulfing darkness of the room. In the context of metaphysics and spiritualism, this ‘dot’ is Brahm, and the creation is made visible due to the light of wisdom and knowledge that emanates from this central point, while the light itself represents consciousness that makes it all possible.

³This is because the entire world owes its existence to the Atma, and the world consists of three basic forms—the gross external body consisting of the various organs that are visible, the subtle body which is not visible but is the hidden operator of this body, and it is made up of the mind and intellect complex, and the subtlest form known as the causal body consisting of the subtle heart inside which the Atma or pure consciousness of the creature resides. This Atma is the very ‘cause’ of the entire setup emerging and working in the manner it does, and therefore the micro-fine and subtlest body that harbours this ‘causative’ Atma in the gross physical body of the creature is called the ‘causal body’—i.e. the body which harbours the ‘cause’ of everything coming into being or coming into effect is called the ‘causal body’.]

2. It is not easy to meditate upon this Bindu (the dot symbolising the atomic form of Divinity) as it is a most difficult and abstract proposition. To worship it, to honour it, to fully appreciate its spiritual importance and metaphysical significance, to contemplate and meditate upon it, to gain access to its stupendous powers and potentials, and to be able to find its refuge and shelter (i.e. seek its blessings and empowerment) is a Herculean task for even the wise, contemplative and skilled ascetics and sages. It is hard to have access to its enigmatic secrets, and even harder to retain their benefits if they are at all accessed after strenuous exercise and diligence (2).

3-4. [The following narration describes the virtuous qualities necessary in an aspirant to make him eligible to have practical understanding of the profound metaphysical secrets of this Bindu and have access to its esoteric knowledge.]

Those who have a balanced diet (i.e. those who are not indulgent in food and held captive by their taste buds), who have vanquished anger, vengefulness and malice, who remain without any company, preferring to lead a solitary life in peace and seclusion, who have successfully exercised control over their sense organs, who treat ‘Sukh and Dukh’, i.e. the opposite emotions of pleasures and happiness as well as sorrows, miseries and pains with equal equanimity and fortitude, remaining unmoved, unfaltering, steadfast and tranquil in mental and emotional turmoil caused by both types of opposing and

contradictory circumstances, who do not have any kind of Ahankar (pride, ego, arrogance and haughtiness), who have no desires, expectations and hopes of any kind, who do not accept anything from anyone more than the bare necessities for sustenance of life (3), who are determined to find that eclectic knowledge and the source of Divinity that is inaccessible to other people and pursue it with whole hearted diligence and steadfastness—only such illustrious persons who have these divine and eclectic virtues in them, those who possess these eclectic qualities in them can ever hope to have access to the great knowledge pertaining to the three facets or aspects (the so-called three ‘Mukha’ or mouths)¹ of OM along with its three abodes or manifestations². That is why such persons are regarded as being equivalent to the bird Swan or ‘Hans’, the bird used as a metaphor for purity, immaculacy, wisdom and divinity³ (4). [3-4].

[Note—¹The Dhyānbindu Upanishad, also refers to these *three aspects* of OM as its three eyes in its verse nos. 9-13. They are called the ‘Triad’ of creation and consists of, inter alia, the following-- symbolically refer to so-called ‘Triad’ of creation—(a) such as the Trinity Gods named Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder; (b) the three states of mortal creation at the micro level—the gross body of the individual creature called the waker or Vishwa, the subtle body of the individual creature called the dreamer or Taijas, and the causal body of the individual creature called the deep sleeper or Praagya; (c) the three states of immortal creation at the macro level—the sum total of all the gross bodies in creation called the cosmic waker or Viraat Purush, the sum total of all the subtle bodies in creation called the cosmic dreamer or Hiranyagarbha, and the sum total of all the causal bodies in creation called the cosmic deep sleeper or Ishwar; (d) the three Gunas called Sata (the noblest quality in the creation), Raja (the medium quality) and Tama (the meanest quality that a creature can possess); (e) the three Shaktis or powers and potentials that drive the world on—such as Gyan Shakti or the power of knowledge, Ichha Shakti or the driving power of desires and ambitions, and Kriya Shakti or the ability and strength to carry out actions and do desired deeds; (f) the three planes of time—such as the past, the present and the future.

²The three abodes of OM are the three divine Gods of the Trinity, viz. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder.

³The bird Swan or *Hansa* is considered the most pure, clean, wise, erudite and clever among the birds. It is believed that it eat pearls and picks them up from amongst an assortment of gems, which symbolically means it picks up and accepts only the best amid the variety of things available to it in the form of an assortment of various qualities and virtues that define the character of all individual creatures in this world. It is also reputed to drink the purest form of milk, leaving aside the water content of an adulterated form of this nourishing liquid. It is also the vehicle of Goddess Saraswati, the patron Goddess of knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, speech and learning. Hence, the reference to a swan while describing a creature conscious of the vital wind or Pran passing through him means the basic, inherent and intrinsic tendency of that wisened and intelligent creature is to be the best, most pure and divine, wise, awakened and enlightened, adroit, clever and sagacious like the swan, and pick all the goodness and forsake all that is bad in this world. Saraswati rides on a swan, symbolising the creature’s inborn enlightenment and excellence of his mental caliber. Symbolically, Saraswati resides in his Pran because it rides on the swan, i.e. in his heart, throat and mind—that is, his heart has purity of emotions, he speaks well of all, and his words are sought after by all as priceless gems of wisdom, and his mind is intelligent, discerning and noble.

The alphabet ‘Ha’ of the word ‘Hansa’ is sounded by the vibration of the exhaled wind passing through the vocal cords present in the throat or the wind pipe which connects to the nose, while the alphabet ‘Sa’ is sounded by the root of the tongue which

opens into the mouth when the breath is inhaled. Both the nose and the mouth open in the same cavity called the throat. Hence, the inter relationship between 'Ha' and 'Sa' is evident. During the twenty-four hour period covering a single day and night, a person inhales and exhales, or breathes, roughly twenty-one thousand times because each cycle of inhalation and exhalation is equivalent to saying one Mantra 'Hans' consisting of the two syllables 'Ha and Sa' (refer Dhyānbindu Upanishad, verse no. 63).

The *Dhyān Bindu Upanishad*, verse no. 24 and 62-63, of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which primarily deals with meditation and contemplation on Brahm in order to obtain emancipation and salvation of the soul of the creature says that the supreme transcendental Brahm, known also as Pranav, resides in the heart of all the living beings in the form of a Hansa. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the divine swan, but he was unaware of his divinity and sublimity, his exalted stature, till that was pointed out to him in this verse. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must do not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan.

The *Yogchudamani Upanishad*, verse no. 82-83 of Sam Veda tradition describes this Swan in the context of Yoga. Refer also to Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 20-28, 61-64, 78-79.]

5. Those who are free from being victims of lethargy and indolence, and who do not seek support from people with worldly tendencies are the ones who can understand the enigmatic secrets of Bindu (the 'dot' symbolising the atomic source of Divinity called Brahm) because this single source of Divinity itself is a vibrant point source of cosmic illumination and independent of any support. This 'Bindu' is the one which gives support to everything in existence.

On the lower side of this Bindu is the crescent shape of the moon (resembling the hollow of a parabolic dish), and this is the symbolic abode of Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of the creation¹ (5).

[Note--¹The combined structure of the dot + dish is called the 'Chandra Bindu'--(◡)].

Lord Vishnu is the sustainer of creation and is said to be a manifestation of the Viraat Purush, the vast, invisible and all-inclusive macrocosmic form of Brahm. Viraat is the subtler form of Vishnu and the first gross manifestation of Brahm. The bowl-like dish at the lower end of the Bindu represents the cosmic crucible where the creation was first conceived, and the dot represents that cosmic source of energy and empowerment that infused first signs of life in the cosmic ether present in this bowl. This is akin to the celestial sun shining in the sky upon the vast bowl of the earth harbouring the first signs of life under water in the form of aquatic flora and fauna before they migrated over the surface when the conditions became conducive to life on the open stretches of the earth above the surface of the water of the oceans and rivers.

The concave reflecting surface of a mirror or the inner surface of a dish has a focal point where all the rays that fall on it converge. This is a basic theory of light in physics which is employed in concentrating rays emanating from the farthest corners of the cosmos in scientific Radars, telecommunication equipments, in household dish antennas that feed signals to the television sets etc. This same principle is applied in metaphysics—when the spiritual aspirant focuses his attention on this hypothetical Bindu or dot, he is literally capturing the cosmic sound waves that are represented by the ethereal word OM and harnessing the cosmic dynamic energy of creation which is known as Brahm or Consciousness.

There is another way of visualizing this phenomenon. The Sun is the focal point of the solar system and the earth revolves around it in a symbolic gesture to harness the Sun's energy and light from all sides. The earth virtually circumambulates or circumnavigates the Sun and pays its obeisance to it just like a person goes around the sacred fire during the religious sacrifice to pay his respect to it. It is a metaphoric way of saying that the earth ensures that none of the Sun's energy, light, heat, splendour and radiance is allowed to escape from benefiting it by going round it and 'capturing' them from all the sides. This Sun is the focal point or Bindu of the solar system. Similarly, Brahm is the focal point or Bindu of all spiritual endeavours.

From the perspective of creation, this Bindu or dot is the point source that provides heat and energy to the cosmic incubator from which the entire creation emerged.]

6. The three subtle letters of OM (i.e. A, U and M) are like the three mouths of the Vedas (i.e. they represent the three primary Vedas, the Rig, Sam and Yajur, embodying holistic knowledge about all aspects of creation). These three components of OM represent all the three Gunas in creation (i.e. the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna, and Tama Guna which determine the basic character and nature of all living beings in creation).

OM, being ethereal, invisible, sublime and subtle in nature, has no definitive forms, no specific definitions, and no distinctive attributes and characteristics that can ever define or characterize it.

It is steady and uniform; it is without any faults, shortcomings and taints of any kind related to this worldly existence; and it has no support for itself because it is self-supporting and self-sustaining (6).

[Note—As it would be observed here, the ethereal word OM representing the entity that is supreme transcendental and cosmic Divinity personified, and which is known by the other synonym of Brahm or Pranav, has such virtues that appear to be contradictory to each other, making OM and its principal subject, the Brahm, so very abstract, enigmatic and esoteric that it becomes a subject beyond the comprehension by logic and rationality of the intelligence-based thinking process of the mind, making it virtually impossible to be grasped and understood. So the only way to witness the truthfulness of its existence and supernatural powers is to personally experience its all-pervasive presence, and this is achieved by meditation and contemplation, and not by indulging in endless debates and trying to arrive at the truth by too literal an interpretation of the various scriptures which is devoid of their practical implications, because they would only add to confusions rather than removing them. This irrefutable fact has been asserted in Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 8. The mysterious nature of Brahm has been expounded in this Upanishad in its four Cantos, 3-6. The Brahm Vidya Upanishad, in its verse nos. 3-9, 71-74 very brilliantly describes the components of OM.]

7. The supreme transcendental Brahm represented by the ethereal divine word OM is such an esoteric and enigmatic entity having no attributes and qualifications, and occupying such an exalted and supreme stature that any kind of suitable epithet, title or honour cannot be found for it, making it impossible for it being precisely and conclusively described in words, physically perceived by any of the sense organs of the body, as well as being completely comprehended by the mind.

In fact, it can be subtly perceived only by one's personal experience of its exalted existence as witnessed during meditation and deliberation on the true form of the pure 'self' (because the 'true and pure self' is Brahm personified as the conscious Atma).

It cannot be described and comprehended in the form of independent subtle and microcosmic components of this vast creation, and neither in the composite form in which they visibly reveal themselves as the physical world (7).

8. It is a personification of eternal beatitude and felicity that is beyond any comparison with anything of its kind in this world. It is very difficult to experience and witness it. It is without any birth or beginning, being eternal and imperishable. It is free from the clutches of various natural tendencies of the mind. It is stable and steady in its own state of existence. It is eternal, uniform and universal. And it is ever exalted and steady in its sublime form, being immune to all demotions and degradations that afflict all other entities in this creation (8).

9. This object of all spiritual pursuits is known as Brahm. It is the object of worship when one worships Lord Vishnu (as it is Vishnu personified). It is the incomprehensible pure conscious Atma residing in the subtle sky or space (of the creature's heart, much like Lord Vishnu who resides in the celestial heavens up in the deep recesses of the sky) (9).

10. It (i.e. Brahm represented by OM) is wholesome, all-pervasive, all-encompassing, all-incorporating and all-inclusive, covering in its ambit the entire creation in all its finest and minutest forms, but at the same time it is none of them and is beyond the purview of all entities in existence.

It is established in the subtle space of the sky (as the pure conscious Atma).

It is neither the one who meditates and contemplates, nor the object of such endeavours, or the process of meditation and contemplation. In spite of this, it is the object of all spiritual pursuits, the aim of all forms of meditation and contemplation. In fact, it is a personification of these auspicious and spiritual virtues of meditation, contemplation, focusing of attention on the truth, and diligently pursuing it (10).

11. It is manifested in the form of everything in existence, pervading in all of them universally and uniformly, but at the same time it is beyond them, enclosing the entire creation from the outside like an all-encompassing sheath or shell. It is like the vast void of the endless space of the cosmos, being fathomless and measureless. In fact, there is nothing beyond it in existence.

It is not only most great and exalted but supreme and transcendental, being beyond the purview of comprehension and imagination. It is such a difficult-to-understand entity that the words 'truth' and 'most enlightened or self-illuminated' are not apt descriptions of it. In fact, no one knows what, which or who it is (11).

12. It is the object of worship, adoration and reverence for great sages and seers (who worship it with firm conviction, faith and devotion without arguing and debating endlessly about its authenticity, relying only on the great truths enunciated in the tenets of the Vedas and other scriptures). The irony is that neither the Gods nor those who call themselves experts in metaphysics and theology (i.e. who are scholars in the reading of scriptures etc.) can ever hope to know it.

Such negative traits as Lobha (greed, rapacity and yearnings), Moha (worldly attachments, attractions, infatuations, delusions and their accompanying traps), Bhaya

(fears of all kinds), Garva (pride, ego, haughtiness, arrogance and hypocrisy), Kaam (worldly desires, lust, passions, yearnings), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness, spitefulness) etc. are like hurdles in the path leading to witnessing and experiencing this eclectic divine entity known as Brahm (12).

13. Other hurdles in getting access to this divine and eclectic entity known as Brahm represented by OM are the following—to be unduly perturbed by such extraneous factors as heat and cold, hunger and thirst¹; making of various vows and having numerous aspirations and determinations, as well as having doubts and confusions (which cause endless perplexities and confoundedness for the spirit, resulting in its getting mired in uncertainties and making it restless); being proud of having a birth as a Brahmin (without having any quality behooving this high birth, of which ‘being proud’ is not one); getting entangled in the web created by allowing oneself to be surrounded by and keeping oneself engrossed in reading the huge tomes of scriptures in an attempt to find Mukti (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) by reading them because they would bog down the person by their sheer volume and endless interpretations which would act like millstones around his neck to drown him instead of liberating and delivering him² (13).

[Note—¹This is because such people are more concerned with providing comfort to the physical body and therefore are not eligible candidates for spiritual pursuit requiring a lot of equanimity, tolerance, sufferance, sacrifice, austerity, enduring hardships, and observance of strict codes of conduct and control over the thought processes of the mind—as it is an uphill journey. The true path of spirituality is marked by enlightenment about what constitutes the ‘real self’ and what is the eternal true goal of life as opposed to the ‘pseudo self’ and transient nature of false goals, which in turn means that the aspirant is well aware that his body is not his ‘real self’ and it is the Atma which is not at all affected by the physical discomfort of the body, such as it suffering from heat or cold, or feeling hungry and thirsty, and that the pursuit of the world can never lead to permanent peace and tranquility.

²The scriptures can show the path but would not actually provide Mukti. If only their literal interpretation is done without understanding their intentions, then it becomes a perfunctory exercise from the spiritual perspective. Merely acquiring literal scholarship and expertise in them instead of actually understanding their subtle meaning and putting their tenets into practice is useless. This fact has been asserted by the Yam God while preaching Nachiketa in Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse nos. 5, 8-9.

The Book of Ecclesiastes, 12/12-14, the *Holy Bible*, Old Testament says almost an identical thing as follows—

12: ‘And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

13: Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

14: For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.]

14. This divine entity is not obtained by those who are under constant fear from the mental and emotional turmoil and restlessness caused by Sukh and Dukh, i.e. by being buffeted by opposing mental emotions as experienced when one is subjected to the buoyant feeling one gets out of various worldly pleasures, joys and happiness on the one hand, and getting immersed and drowned in waves of sorrows, pains, distresses, agonies

and torments of all kinds on the other hand. Similarly, it is not accessible by those who are too touchy by nature, feeling insulted, humiliated on the one hand or feeling praised and honoured on the other hand at the slightest hint.

Only those persons who are free from such corrupted thought processes and have been able to exercise control over an unsteady and fickle mind that creates an entangling web of emotional upheavals are eligible and qualified to have access to the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm (14).

[Note--¹This is because such emotions keep the mind perpetually distracted and violently agitated, which is not conducive to any endeavour requiring great peace and stability of mind, because this is a necessity for fixing attention and concentrating the energies of the mind towards higher pursuits. Only a calm and focused mind can do some original thinking and research, whether in the realm of the material world or the metaphysical field of spiritualism.]

15. The supreme transcendental Brahm can be witnessed and experienced by a spiritual aspirant by diligently following the eclectic tenets pertaining to the principles of Yam, Niyam¹, Tyag², Maun³, Desh and Kaal⁴.

Other paths are doing Yoga in accordance with its profound philosophy of practicing various Aasans⁵, other exercises such as Moolbandh⁶, uniform restraint of the various organs of the body and keeping them restrained, calm and restful, and focusing the sight on one's objective and aims in life without getting distracted by so many different perceptions and confusing ideas and views that occur in this world of myriad notions (i.e. being of a steady mind and intellect as well as unwavering in one's spiritual pursuits). (15)

[Note--¹The virtues of *Yam* and *Niyam* have been described in Skanda Puran, Bra. Dha. Maa. 5/19-21.

The ten 'Yams' are—truthfulness, forgiveness, simplicity, Dhyan (meditation, concentration of the mind), lack of cruelty (or presence of compassion and mercy), forsaking violence, restraint of mind and sense organs, pleasant demeanors and sweet towards all).

The ten 'Niyams' are—cleanliness/ablution, bath (purification of body), Tapa (austerities, penances, sufferings), alms and charities, keeping silence, Yagya (sacrifices, religious rituals), self study, observance of vows, keeping fasts, celibacy. (Skanda Puran, Bra. Dha. Ma. 5/19-21)

The Varaaha Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its canto 5, verse nos. 12 ½ --14 also describes these Yams and Niyams.

²*Tyag* can be broadly defined as renunciation, detachment, non-involvement, disinterest and dispassion as well as abandonment of all things that are not conducive to one's spiritual well being, which bog down the creature in the swamp of delusions and false charms of this world based on ignorance of reality, and which cause hurdles in one's long term spiritual goal, enlightenment, emancipation and salvation.

³*Maun* is to keep silent and not speaking anything not true; to abhor talking unnecessarily, and even of things about which no certainty can be ascertained. For example, no one can precisely define Brahm, so it is better to keep quiet about it than to boast of knowing who or what Brahm is by unnecessarily attempting to describe it to prove one's knowledge and expertise in the scriptures.

⁴*Desh and Kaal* refer to a certain period of time, era, location and circumstance to which a reference is being made when something is said so as to properly understand its context and decipher the correct meaning in that context.

⁵*Aasans* are the various sitting postures adopted during Yoga, or while doing meditation and contemplating upon some serious topic. These have been elaborately described in all Upanishads dealing with the subject of Yoga. One of the Aasans dealt with here is Siddhasan in verse no. 26 below.

⁶*Moolbandh* is a form of Yoga exercise fully described Dhyān Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 73-74^{1/2} as well as verse no. 27 below.]

16. The spiritual aspirant should practice the six paths of Yoga which are conducive to providing success to him in his spiritual pursuit. These are Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna, Dhyān, Aasan and Samadhi. These paths help in witnessing and experiencing the supreme Divinity by the aspirant (16).

[Note--According to Dhyān Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 41 belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the *six limbs of Yoga* are the following—Aasan (sitting posture), Pranayam (breath control), Pratyahar (withdrawal of the mind and its control), Dharna (having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path), Dhyān (contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect), and Samadhi (a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation). Also refer Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse nos. 5-8, 16-17.]

17. 'Everything is Brahm'—realising the profundity of this great maxim of the scriptures, one should practice restraint over all the organs of the body, the gross organs (such as the organs of perception—eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin, and the organs of action—legs, hands, mouth, genitals and excretory) as well as the subtle organs (mind and intellect). This is called 'Yam', and it should be constantly and diligently practiced (17).

18. 'Niyam' has been defined as the acceptance and implementation of knowledge that is eclectic, truthful, holy and spiritual in nature as well as conducive to acquisition of true wisdom, enlightenment, self-realisation and Brahm-realisation, and rejection of that knowledge which has an opposite effect¹.

Wise, erudite and sagacious spiritual aspirants finds supreme happiness and bliss if they diligently follow this tenet about what constitutes true 'Niyam' (18).

[Note--¹That is, all forms of knowledge, skills and learning that pull the creature away from the truth and put a spanner in his endeavours to reach higher goals in life, and instead entangle him in the web of falsehoods and delusions represented by this material world of sense objects characterised by uncountable forms of mental turmoil and physical discomfort, a world which is nevertheless hollow, perishable and transient, should best be avoided and abandoned altogether because such knowledge do not give eternal happiness and peace, because this knowledge is misleading, because this knowledge keeps the creature bogged down in this world of artificiality and illusionary charms that keeps him far away from spiritual enlightenment and salvation, and because such knowledge keeps the creature tossing and churning in the midst of this world much like a piece of helpless wood caught in a choppy ocean during a storm.

On the other hand, that knowledge which bestows eternal peace and blissfulness upon the creature and helps him to realise his true goal in life, aiding him in his search of finding his roots originating in the divine fount of this eternal peace and blissfulness—the fount of supreme transcendental Divinity represented by the mystical 'Tej Bindu' which is a metaphor for the mystical point from which everything eclectic, sublime, holy and divine has sprung forth in this creation like an eternal cosmic fountain of effervescent

cosmic energy along with pulsating spiritual vibrancy and vitality, and which is given the name of 'Brahm'—so that his soul gets final rest and peace by realising its high birth, its noble pedigree, its divine heritage, its eternal and exalted nature as pure consciousness which is completely different from the delusions that are hallmarks of this world. This knowledge provides the soul with emancipation and deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death as well as from being tossed and kicked around by delusions and ignorance, and therefore it is to be welcomed and grasped with both the hands.]

19. 'Tyag' (renunciation, abandonment, retraction, forsaking, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement) of all things worldly, non-truthful and non-spiritual is regarded as the best form of spiritual observances. Tyag leads the path to obtaining liberation and deliverance quickly (19).

[Note—It is only when a spiritual aspirant gets totally detached from this material world and renounces all its pleasures and comforts that he can whole-heartedly pursue his spiritual goals without any kind of mental distraction or emotional shackles. He would have nothing to worry about, no assets to protect, no material objects and goals to acquire and achieve, no one to please, no bias towards anything, and no obligations to keep. It is just like a student who is free to concentrate on his studies is expected to do much better than one who has to look after his family if the bread earner father has passed away, for in the latter case this poor lad would find it difficult to devote his entire time and energy on his studies.]

20. The supreme transcendental Brahm is not the subject that can be accessed and learnt by the mind like it does with other material things of this world, or an object that can be visualised and obtained by it by making efforts. Similarly, Brahm cannot be the subject which can be known and described by the means of words, and neither can be the words proficient enough to do so if even they wish. In other words, Brahm is beyond the scope of both the mind and words. Brahm cannot be imagined and fathomed by the mind, and it cannot be described in words.

Hence, wise ascetics realise Brahm by the path of 'silence' or 'Maun'. They turn inwards to witness and experience this profound fount of supreme Divinity in their own self, and once witnessed and experienced it cannot be described (much like it is impossible to describe just how 'sweet' the sweetmeat was after one has tasted it and asked to describe its taste afterwards). A wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened one is he who meditates and contemplates upon Brahm silently and serenely (and not by showing off his mystical potentials as something to be showcased in a shop window so as to earn name, fame and respect!) (20).

[Note—That is why it is said that 'silence is divine' and the best prayer offered to the Lord is the 'prayer of silence'. Words have their own limitations and it is just not possible to describe the ocean by taking a sample of its water and saying that 'this is the ocean'. At best, it is a representative of the ocean, giving an idea as to what kind of water one can expect in an ocean, but ocean is just not water but an entire ecosystem and a marine world as fascinating as the one on the outside of its surface, having its own unique rich culture of flora and fauna]

21. When the faculty of speech called the 'Vaani' is inept and insufficient to describe it or say anything coherent or intelligible about it in a comprehensive manner, surrendering

in its attempt to do so and preferring to keep quiet instead (to save its face and further embarrassment), say then how can it (Brahm) be described by anyone else?

That faculty of speech which is so efficient in vividly describing this deluding myriad world of charming artificiality and fascinatingly enticing colours of numerous shades and hues that keep the creature enchanted and enthralled as if spellbound by a magical wand, fails miserably when it comes to describing the supreme transcendental Truth known as Brahm (21).

22. 'Silence' (Maun) is the only and best medium to realise, know and learn, as well as to describe anything about that supreme Divinity.

Since 'observance of the vows of silence' is an impossibility for those who are childish and restless by nature (i.e. those who are unwise, those who are inclined towards the world instead of matters spiritual, those who are talkative and fickle-minded, allured easily by the charms of this world and remaining engrossed in them just like chattering children in a school playground or a child surrounded by toys in a toy shop and let loose in it), this eclectic knowledge pertaining to the supreme Truth and Divinity is accessible only to the fortunate few who are deeply conscious of their true 'self' and sufficiently mature to pursue the path of Brahm realisation (22).

[Note—Brahm realisation and Self realisation is not a child's play just like doing original research in any field of science or arts is not everybody's pie. It requires special aptitude and bearing of the mind besides willingness to follow stern rules and self control, and 'observance of silence' is one such golden rule. Silence helps to preserve and concentrate one's energy and vitality on the task at hand; it prevents the mind from being unnecessarily disturbed by futile chatter and literally gobbling up more than it can cope with. People have sacrificed their entire lives in seclusion while making great inventions and discoveries. Has anyone ever heard cheap market place banter and cacophony of the bar or pop folk theatres in a scientific laboratory where great research is being done? Surely such verbosity is not conducive to serious scientific research as much as a talkative and fidgety aspirant is totally ineligible and unsuited for spiritual pursuits.]

23. That which has no beginning, no middle or an end, but that which is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing being uniformly and universally present in the entire creation as its subtle Atma (core or soul)—it is said that such an eclectic mysterious entity has this entire creation as its abode and domain, called its 'Desh' (literally, its country or native place where it permanently dwells) (23).

[Note—That is, the supreme transcendental Brahm is not limited to this or that particular entity in creation, but present in every pore and minutest aspect or facet of it. Therefore, the entire manifested creation is its domain and abode.]

24. The truthful awareness of what constitutes 'Kaal' (literally an era, the concept of time and phase in individual life of a creature or creation as a whole, any circumstance, the cycle of birth and death) is this—to visualise the entire creation, from the minutest to the grandest, from the smallest individual creature to the cosmic creator known as Brahma, as being part of one big cycle of birth and death is true awareness of the profundity, extensive extent and astounding import of the term 'Kaal'.

This Kaal is all-inclusive; nothing is beyond its reach and influence. It is indivisible and immutable—the visualization of various phases of time such as minute, hour, month, year, season etc. are simply imaginations of the mind to felicitate

understanding of the phenomenon of life. Actually, Kaal is one single non-dual, indivisible whole, just like a fount of eternal blissfulness (known as Brahm)¹ (24).

[Note—¹One day of Brahma is equivalent to the period of time in which the four Yugs—i.e. the four divisions in which one cycle of birth and death are divided into, such as the Sata Yug when the Vedas are said to have been revealed and Upanishads composed, the Treta Yug when Lord Ram manifested, the Dwapar Yug when Lord Krishna came, and the current Kali Yug—pass over one thousand times. And the life of Brahma is one hundred years. By this reckoning, just imagine the measurement of time in the cosmic scale when numerous Brahmas are born and expire.

To draw a parallel from the contemporary world, we measure the distance of far away stars in 'light years', i.e. the distance that light covers in so many years. The light covers a distance of approx. 9,500,000,000,000 Km. in one year. So when it said that a particular star is one million light years away, we can well imagine its distance if we try to compare it with the term 'kilometer' or 'meter' we are accustomed with.

Likewise, the cycle of birth and death of an individual creature is almost like a tiny speck of sand particle on the vast beach of creation, or like a drop of water in an ocean.]

25. 'Aasan' is defined as that sitting posture of meditation in which one can sit reasonably comfortably and contemplate and fix his mind upon the thoughts of the supreme Brahm without any kind of discomfort which might cause distraction in meditation, thereby hindering its successful progress.

The thoughts of Brahm is so fulfilling and blissful that when one sits in a comfortable Aasan and meditates upon this eternal fount of beatitude and felicity, all other charms fade away and lose their attractions (just like the case when one finds a spring of fresh and pure mineral water he would forget drinking water drawn from a polluted lake or river, no matter how holy it might be). All his desires to obtain comforts and pleasures from other source of happiness in this deluding world subside once he has discovered this sparkling eternal fount of blissfulness (25).

26. All the Aasans¹ are equally important and are able to help the spiritual aspirant achieve his goal of Brahm-realisation and self-realisation, as well as acquire mystical powers. The various designated Aasans are the best postures that should be adopted if one wishes to achieve success in his meditative practice (without discomfort and distractions). That Aasan by which ascetics obtain mystical powers is called 'Siddha Aasan' (26).

[Note—¹Proper sitting postures are very important in meditation just like they are in every field of life. For example, one should sit in a particular fashion while working at the computer for long hours if one wishes to maintain concentration without damaging the eyes and harming the body over long periods of time. Similarly, there are proper ways in which the body should be borne while one sleeps, walks, runs, and does so many other routine things in life to stay healthy and prevent chronic diseases of the skeleton and muscles and keep the body properly tuned. These Aasans have been described in Upanishads dealing with Yoga philosophy, such as Yogchudamani and Jabal Darshan (Canto 3) of the Sam Veda tradition, and Mandal Brahmin of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, as well as the Dhyan Bindu Upanishad and the Amritnaad Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

²The *Siddha Aasan*-- To sit in this posture, the two legs are first stretched out. The left leg is then bent at the knee and folded in so that the heel touches the genitals and the sole lies flat against the inner thighs of the right leg. Then the right leg is folded in and

the heel is placed in front of the pubic bone and the sole touches the inner thigh of the previously folded left leg. The two hands are stretched out and the outer side of the wrist of each hand is placed on the bent knee-joint of the respective side. The palm is opened and the thumb is touched by the bent first finger to form a virtual ring, with the remaining three fingers held straight out. The practitioner sits perfectly in a ram-rod straight position, with the spine, the neck and the head in a straight line. The mental sight is fixed on a spot in front of the nose, and this state of intense concentration is maintained as long as is feasible for the practitioner. Then the legs are gradually unfolded and after some period of relaxation, the process is repeated with the opposite leg being folded in first and placed below the other leg. It is believed that this posture is one of the best postures to be adopted for Yoga amongst the eighty four lakh (84×10^5) postures of meditation. The fact that there are as many numbers of Aasans as there are species of living beings is endorsed by Dhyānbindu Upanishad, verse no. 42 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. This Siddha Aasan is capable of cleansing all the seventy two thousand Naadis (ducts in the body), and is so-called because it is possible to access the divine source of cosmic energy trapped inside the body as well as experience the cosmic power of the kindled Spirit by employing this Aasan. The word 'Siddha' implies one who has acquired stupendous mystical and supernatural powers that are beyond the parameters of the physical and mundane world.]

27. The 'Moolbandh' is closing of that spot in the body which is like the base or foundation for all living beings. It is possible to control the mind and its attention by controlling this Mool or root, which can be done by closing it or doing the Moolbandh. Those who are well versed in the philosophy pertaining to meditation as a tool of Brahm-realisation should be very particular about it (as it helps them to control their mind and its faculties) (27).

[Note--The word 'Mool' means the origin or basis of anything, and 'bandh' means to stop or close. The Moolbandh is done by pressing the genitals with the heels and constricting the muscles of the anus to close this opening. Meanwhile, the Apaana Vayu (the wind present in the rectum and anus region) is pulled upwards forcefully. It is described in Dhyānbindu Upanishad, verse no. 73-74^{1/2} and Yog-Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 42 of Krishna Yajur Veda which are part of this volume, as well as in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 46 of Sam Veda tradition.]

28. Just like one treats all the organs of his body equally and takes care of all of them with equal concern, he should also treat all the parts of the society (i.e. all the living beings belonging to different categories of life, such as those belonging to the plant kingdom as well as those belonging to the animal kingdom, including people belonging to different races, classes, religions, geographical areas and colours) equally and take equal care of them.

He should see the same Brahm as pervading uniformly and universally throughout the entire creation, right from the dried stem of a large tree to the tree that is vibrant with life. If one distinguishes between the two, it implies that he does not have equality in vision (28).

29. The truthful eye of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment which is possessed by a Brahm-realised person is one through which a person sees the entire world as a personification of one, single, non-dual Brahm. He looks at the world with eyes of

equality; he treats everyone and everything in the same manner, having no sense of distinction between any two entities.

Merely fixing the eye at the tip of the nose as done during various Yoga exercises of fixing attention is not the best form of sight (29).

[Note—This is like taking a potshot at those who blindly follow the methods prescribed in the scriptures without understanding their practical aspect and their subtle meaning. It is like a student learning a text book by rote but failing to apply what he has learnt into practice. This fixing of the sight at the tip of the nose is part of some of the famous Mudras or meditative postures such as Khechari Mudra. It is believed that it bestows astounding mystical powers upon the practitioner if done successfully so much so that he is able to see the three planes of time, i.e. the past, the present and the future. But if he does not have equanimity of vision, if he has no compassion and mercy towards all, if he is still clamped down in notions of mine and yours, me and you, then it is futile to exert one's self and make the body suffer by adopting some grotesque postures.]

30. The real 'sight' in metaphysical terms is that in which the distinction between the viewer, the object viewed, and the process of viewing is removed. In other words, truthful spiritual sight is that in which Brahm is perceived as the one who views, the object viewed, and even the medium of viewing. One should strive to have this holistic vision of this creation which is seamless uniformity; it is Brahm or Consciousness everywhere without exception.

To pretend to be fixing one's sight at the tip of the nostrils while one meditates upon one non-dual Brahm is not the holistic way of looking at this Brahm (30).

[Note--This is like trying to deceive oneself because on the one hand one's objective is noble and one is trying to make the most divine entity in creation as one's ideal idol for worship, trying to emulate its grand virtues and become enlightened about it in a holistic way, and on the other hand one has not understood what that icon stands for in real terms, one has not inculcated the ideals that this idol stands for. So the entire exercise goes to waste.]

31. True form of Pranayam (exercising restraint of the vital winds) is when one is able to restrain all his mental 'Vrittis'¹, and have a firmness of mind and conviction with regard to the fact that this entire creation is Brahm personified, that there is nothing in existence that is not Brahm (31).

[Note—¹The term *Vritti* refers to the natural inclinations and habits of the mind and its wayward tendencies. Since the mind controls one's attention, thoughts and intelligence as well as the organs of perception and action in the gross body, the extended form of this term includes the natural tendency of the creature to veer towards things which give it instant gratification and pleasure even at the cost of its long term harm. Even as Pranayam is considered as the bulwark in the field of meditation exercises as it helps to cleanse the body of all toxins and prepare the practitioner to progress further in his spiritual practice, control of Vrittis is equally important and effective tool to help him to control his mind which is at the root of all activities.]

32. To remove the mind from the entire array of delusions and magical charms spread all around it in this material world is tantamount to the 'Rechak' phase of Pranayam¹.

Similarly, to have a firmness of conviction and steadiness in belief in the truthfulness of the maxim and the universal axiom of the Vedas that 'I am Brahm personified' ('Aham Brahmasmi') is tantamount to the Puruk phase of Pranayam². (32).

[Note--¹The *Rechak* phase means exhaling breath after holding it for a while inside the body so that all accumulated waste gases and toxins are eliminated along with it. This is like the washing off or the cleansing phase of Pranayam. Here the word 'Rechak' implies the spiritual aspirant has cleansed his inner self of all spiritual impurities and tainting affects of the delusory world that has cast a dark shadow on the aspirant's immaculate Atma which is 'true self'.

²The *Purak* phase refers to inhaling fresh breath after stale one has been let out during the Rechak phase. Here the implication is that after all the corrupting thoughts have been eliminated from the mind, and after the mind is cleansed of all their ill influences, the aspirant is now prepared to receive fresh noble thoughts and fill his innards with refined views of the creation that are invigorating for his spirit much like oxygen rich inhaled air is invigorating for his body.

This statement 'I am Brahm' is one of the so-called 'Maha Vakyas' and they have been explained in great detail in 'Shuk-Rahasya Upanishad. They are also the subject matter of many great Upanishads, such as Kaivalya Upanishad, verse no. 16; Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse nos. 12-14 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Atmo-panishad and Mahavakya Upanishad of Atharva Veda tradition; Atma Bodh Upanishad of Rig Veda tradition; Painga Upanishad, 3-2 and Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.]

33. To control the various 'Vrittis' of the mind and intellect (as described in note to verse no. 31) is tantamount to doing Khumbhak phase of Pranayam for wise and enlightened ascetics¹. Stupid and ignorant people think that merely pressing the nose and preventing the winds from escaping from the nose is doing Kumbhak (33).

[Note—¹*Kumbhak* is the phase of Pranayam when inhaled air is withheld inside the body for a fixed time before it is expelled. The idea of 'holding of the breath' is extended here to incorporate the controlling of the wayward tendencies of the mind, as reining in of the mind is of utmost importance for success in any endeavour, be it spiritual or otherwise. This holding of the Vrittis is like bridling the horse, putting a harness to it and yoking it to the chariot while it is strictly reined in by an expert charioteer. Otherwise the chariot would have a good chance of tumbling over the roadside if the horse is not put under tight leash.

There is another way of looking at 'Kumbhak' phase of Pranayam from the perspective of metaphysics. When the aspirant has imbibed noble virtues as implied by the 'Purak' phase as indicated in verse no. 32 above, he is asked here to retain them inside his inner being during the Kumbhak phase so as to benefit from them instead of frittering them away by quickly doing 'Rechak' phase or symbolically eliminating them along with the exhalation of breath. Even as oxygen-rich inhaled breath taken in during the Purak phase benefits the body when it is allowed to remain inside the body for certain period of time so that it can sufficiently oxidize the tissues and reinvigorate the body before it is exhaled, these imbibed good and auspicious virtues should be given time to mould the inherent character and personality of the aspirant for his overall good; they should be allowed to percolate down his inner self to bring about an effective positive change in the overall nature, attitude and outlook of the aspirant. This change would be reflected in his behaviour and thinking processes.

See verse no. 34 below which compliments this verse.]

34. The firm conviction and a holistic view that the same universal cosmic entity known as the Atma is uniformly present in all the objects in this world that are the subject of various perceptions such as sight, smell, hearing, tasting and feeling, to be able to see that

single non-dual universal Atma everywhere, is called the true form of Pratyahar¹. This all-inclusive and universal view of the presence of Divinity everywhere and in everything helps the spiritual aspirant in cleansing his mind and intellect of all forms of impurities.

Hence, a wise aspirant should practice it with due diligence and sincerity to become an expert in this view of thinking² (34).

[Note—¹*Pratayahar* is withdrawal of the mind and its control. This verse compliments verse no. 33.

²When one becomes steady in his beliefs then no matter how much he has to suffer or how strong are the forces of delusions sweeping over him like a strong gale, he would stand his ground and not waver from his chosen path even for a fleeting moment no matter what compulsions he has to face.]

35. 'Dharna' is to have the vision of the supreme transcendental Brahm in all the places where the mind goes, and to have firmness of conviction and faith in this vision. This is the best form of having the virtue of Dharna as a tool to realise Brahm (35).

[Note—*Dharna* is one of the six limbs of Yoga. It briefly means to have a firm conviction, faith and belief in connection with something. When the spiritual aspirant begins to see Brahm everywhere wherever the mind goes, he would be having a non-dual vision of Brahm, and this view would compliment what has already been said earlier in previous verses.]

36. 'Dhyan' is to be steady in the thought of 'I am Brahm personified' (see verse no. 32), to be constantly engrossed in meditating and focusing the mind upon the 'truthful self' as a personified Brahm to the extent that no other props or supports are needed to reinforce this conviction. This realisation, this firm conviction, this enlightened view about Brahm and the 'self' provides immense happiness and bliss (36).

[Note—*Dhyan* is defined as contemplation and deep concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect. It is also regarded as one of the six limbs of Yoga. Obviously, no great achievement is possible without a focused and concentrated mind. So if the spiritual aspirant is firm in his conviction that his Atma is Brahm personified, it would aid him in his spiritual upliftment as compared to the situation when he is full of doubts about the authenticity of this statement and keeps on jumping ships in the hope of reaching his spiritual destination, in which case he would be left neither here nor there.]

37. The last step in spiritual endeavour is the eclectic and transcendental state of 'Samadhi'. It is the apex of the pyramidal structure of all types of spiritual pursuits because it represents that perpetual state of supreme blissfulness obtained by complete enlightenment that comes with self-realisation and Brahm-realisation that transcends all other forms of mystical achievements.

When all the misconceptions, taints, deformations and defects of the mind and heart that have their origin in delusions and ignorance about the reality are eliminated, when they are thoroughly cleansed of all impure thoughts and made immune to all sorts of distractions and corrupting influences that ordinarily taint the creature's immaculate 'self', and when this makes him steady, sincere and diligent in his spiritual pursuit, it is only then that the excellent notion of 'I am Brahm personified' dawns on the spiritual horizon of any spiritual aspirant. [In all other cases, if a person makes this statement, he is, in all probability, being deceitful and untruthful.]

Samadhi is that state of existence when all other thoughts are sincerely banished from the mind for good except the eclectic and sublime thought of 'I am Brahm personified'¹. This eclectic thought takes firm hold and sweeps away all other thoughts from the spiritual aspirant's mind and heart for good (resulting in the state of utter blissfulness described in verse no. 38 below) (37).

[Note--¹Here, the word 'I' refers to the pure conscious Atma residing in the subtle heart of the spiritually enlightened person. This individual Atma of the creature is a microcosmic counterpart of the all-pervading, supreme, transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. This Brahm has manifested itself in the form of the visible world consisting of animate creatures as well as inanimate things, and therefore all that exists is nothing but Brahm, including the person who makes this solemn statement 'I am Brahm personified'. Of course, as it is obvious here, if this statement comes from a convinced heart in a convincing manner, it is indeed a realisation of the great truth by such a man, and therefore he is indeed enlightened. Otherwise, such a statement is unwarranted and uncalled for, and it is full of deceit and like cheating one's own self as well as all the others around.

Since the aim of all spiritual pursuit is to realise this supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm, the ultimate Truth and Reality in creation, so when a person has sincerely made this statement without any trace of deceit and doubt that 'I am Brahm personified', it is deemed that he has realised that final goal of all spiritual endeavours, i.e. he has come to terms with the great doctrine of the Vedas that the Supreme Being known as Brahm is not somewhere high up in the sky but immediately here and even so close to the person that the person and Brahm are indistinguishable from one another. In other words, the enlightened person becomes as holy and divine as the cosmic Divinity itself.

Samadhi is the stage in spiritual efforts when the aspirant has transcended other stages in the spiritual hierarchy and reached a trance like state of existence marked by perpetual blissfulness obtained when one has tasted the nectar of eternity, beatitude and felicity springing forth from the pure conscious Atma, the true 'self' of the spiritual aspirant, which in turn is a personification of the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. When this realisation dawns upon the spiritual horizon of the aspirant, no other experiences matter.]

38. The eclectic sense of blissfulness, the perpetual state of beatitude and felicity obtained during Samadhi is eternal, natural, genuine, of a high profile and quality, effusive and effervescent in nature, while all other types of happiness and joys are false, artificial and transient.

Constant practice of Samadhi and other spiritual methods (as enumerated in this Upanishad) makes an ascetic perfect in his spiritual achievements, and he ultimately attains his goal of Brahm and 'self' realisation. He effectively becomes a personification of the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the true sense of the word. This divine enlightenment makes him spiritually liberated and delivered; he attains emancipation and salvation for his soul even while he is still alive in this world and has a physical body. This is called 'Jivan Mukti'—to be liberated and delivered even while living in this world with a gross body and going about one's normal duties vis-à-vis the world¹ (38).

[Note—¹In other words, when he has become enlightened and self-realised, it does not matter to him whether or not 'he' (i.e. his 'true self', the pure conscious Atma, the soul, the divine Spirit present in his body) has a physical body or not, for he had totally

disassociated himself from the latter and remains in a complete detached state of mind. It does not matter to him whether or not his body suffers from any disease for instance, whether or not the body is comfortable or in discomfort, and so on and so forth.]

39. When he has reached this exalted state of existence as obtained during Samadhi, he does not need the help of any other means in his spiritual progress any further. He has become the 'attained one', the 'realised one', 'the enlightened one'. Such a person is deemed to be a king amongst ascetics and spiritual aspirants. He has obtained mystical powers and potentials which are supernatural.

He becomes totally submerged and soaked in the thoughts of Brahm. All his sense perceptions, his mind and heart, as well as his faculty of speech become devoted to Brahm; they are centered around Brahm; Brahm becomes the pivot around which his entire being, his whole existence revolves.

This unique state of existence in which nothing exists and nothing else matters for him but Brahm makes such a devoted ascetic firmly established in the truthful form of Brahm realisation, i.e. he becomes a living embodiment of the glories and divinity of Brahm (39).

40-41. As soon as the ascetic reaches the state of Samadhi, numerous problems and hurdles suddenly present themselves before him, trying to deviate him from his path and demote him from his spiritual achievements. He is often enmeshed in their web and falls from his chosen path.

Some of these spiritual obstacles are the following—to deviate and waver from the chosen path to research the truth of Brahm, i.e. the path of Brahm-realisation, to be overcome with lethargy, indolence and inertia, to have a desire and longing to gratify the sense organs and enjoy the objects of these sense organs and their attendant pleasures and comforts, to have worldly passions, lust and yearnings, and be infatuated with the objects that arouse such emotions (40), to be engulfed in the darkness of ignorance and delusions causing bewilderment and confusions in the absence of light of truthful knowledge and erudition about the reality and its accompanying enlightenment and wisdom, to be deterred by efforts made during meditation which cause so much exertion that one begins to sweat, to be so much mentally distracted that it is difficult to fix attention on the chosen goal, etc.

A wise and erudite aspirant of spiritualism should exercise special caution and guard against these pitfalls and remain wary of them. He should painstakingly keep them at bay (41) [40-41.]

42. 'One becomes what one thinks about constantly'—this is an established adage. So when one begins to remain indifferent to and immune from all emotions and thoughts other than that of Brahm, when one inculcates the habit of remaining in a state of perpetual indifference and non-involvement in anything pertaining to this existence other than the thoughts of Brahm, it is natural that gradually the mind and its natural tendencies withdraw from everything else and become concentrated on this one single point, the thoughts of Brahm.

Hence, the true state of Samadhi, its true accomplishment and its real consummation is when the ascetic begins to think that Brahm is present as his own self as affirmed and asserted by the great saying of the Vedas, i.e. 'I am Brahm'. When this

happens, the ascetic has come full circle. This is the holistic and all-inclusive view and philosophy pertaining to Brahm. The ascetic must practice this state of fulsome realisation of Brahm during his Samadhi (42).

43. The wise and enlightened ascetic should inculcate this holy and eclectic view point that everyone and everything in existence, including him, is Brahm. This is the holistic, best and most auspicious view of creation. This is the noblest form of thought that distinguishes an enlightened one from others, and any other notion of creation other than this would make a man no different from an animal. Such a man's life is lived in futility (43).

44. Those who have this eclectic, auspicious, holy and holistic view of the divine supreme cosmic Consciousness known as the venerable Brahm, who constantly contemplate and meditate upon this Brahm, are the ones who can be truly called self-realised, Brahm-realised, holy and auspicious. They are indeed the privileged and fortunate ones. They are certainly the wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened ones. They are worthy of honour in the three worlds—the terrestrial, the celestial and the nether worlds (44).

45. Those who are truly wise, enlightened and Brahm-realised are endowed with this eclectic vision of creation and begin to see all in equal terms; they develop high degree of equanimity and fortitude that makes them exemplarily calm, tranquil and serene. Gradually and by diligent practice this thought process matures and becomes their natural habit and normal way of thinking. [In other words, such ascetics and enlightened persons do not have to make special efforts and exert their mind into thinking that this world in all its varied manifestations is nothing but the truthful Brahm personified, so all should be treated equally. This vision of creation is normal for them; it is part of their natural view and perception of the world.] Indeed, such people have truly realised Brahm; they have truly understood who or what Brahm is.

By simply saying 'I am Brahm personified' without being convinced of its profound truthfulness, its magnificent and wholesome spiritual value, and its far reaching and all-inclusive import, one does not qualify to be called Brahm-realised or wise and enlightened. Such persons have not understood the true and honest form of the supreme transcendental reverend Being known as Brahm (45).

46. Those who make big talks about Brahm (i.e. preach about Brahm, boast about their knowledge of Brahm, pretend to be Brahm-realised) without actually inculcating any of the glorious virtues of Brahm or depicting any sign of a truly Brahm-realised wise and enlightened soul—such persons are totally ignorant of Brahm and do not have anything to do with Brahm. [They are imposters and cheats.] Such people repeatedly die and take birth; they are not freed from this endless cycle. [In other words, such people can never hope to get emancipation and salvation for their self.] (46).

47. On the other hand, those who have actually tasted the ambrosia of Brahm-realisation, those who have imbibed and inculcated the glorious and auspicious virtues of Brahm in themselves, cannot abstain from the thoughts of Brahm even for a moment (because this

thought of Brahm gives them so much ecstasy and bliss that they wish to constantly drink this nectar for eternity).

Some of the great sages and seers who come under this category and can be cited as examples here are Shukdeo¹ and Sanakadi², as well as the creator Brahma himself who remain eternally engrossed in the thoughts of the venerable Brahm. Like them, those who are true seekers of this supreme Brahm also remain submerged in the thoughts of the venerable Brahm (47).

[Note—¹*Shukdeo* was the son of the legendary seer and renowned sage Veda Vyas. He was highly respected and was born of the celestial maiden named Ghri-taachi when she had taken the form of a parrot, called Shuka in Sanskrit, to produce Shukdeo. He had his education under the expert guidance of his father Veda Vyas as well as from the legendary king Janak, the father of Sita of the Ramayan fame and the most self-realised and enlightened king of his time. His self restraint was so profound that the celestial Apsara, the dancing damsel of the court of Indra, the king of Gods, failed to trap in her honey trap. Shukdeo learnt the epic Bhagvata Mahapurana from his father and then narrated it to Parikshit at the culmination of the Dwapar Yug (the third era of the four-era celestial cycle of mythology) and the beginning of the present era called Kali Yug.

In Maho-panishad of Sam Veda tradition there is an incident where the sage Shukdeo had to wait for twenty-one days before king Janak granted him an audience to test his sincerity and steadfastness. Shukdeo had been sent by his father Veda Vyas to king Janak to learn certain secrets of metaphysics (Maho-panishad, 2/21-28).

There are two Upanishads that owe their revelation to sage Shukdeo—on in part and the other in full. The first one is Maho-panishad of Sam Veda whose Canto 2 is especially dedicated to the discourse given by Veda Vyas and later on by king Janak to satisfy the metaphysical queries of Shukdeo. The second is Shuk Rahasya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda which was preached by Lord Shiva to Shukdeo.

²*Sanakaadi*—Sage Sanatkumar is considered as one of the four Manas Putras or the mental-born sons of the creator Brahma. The other three are Sanak, Sanatsujaat and Sanandan. They are regarded in a perpetual state of boyhood. Together they are called ‘Sanakaadi Rishis’.

According to Kalagni Rudra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Sanatkumar was taught how to wear the Tripund, the three lines marked on the forehead of all Hindus, by Lord Kalagni Rudra, a form of Shiva, himself. Sanatkumar had taught the greatness of Vishnu to demon Vrittaasur, the enemy of Indra, the king of Gods. He also taught spiritual wisdom to sage Narad, the celestial sage.

Sanatsujaat taught spiritual wisdom to Dhrtrashtra who was the blind father of the Kauravas of the epic Mahabharat fame. Sanak is said to an eternal companion of Lord Vishnu. Sanandan is regarded as the ancient preacher of the Sankhya Shastra, even more ancient than Kapil.]

48. As long as there is a ‘Kaaran’ (cause), there will be a relevant ‘Kaarya’ (effect). This relationship between them is eternal and infinite in creation¹.

This is why the thoughts of charming sense objects of the material world and the pleasures and comforts provided by them (the Kaaran or cause) create a desire for them, the yearning and longing for them (the Kaarya or effect). If one wishes to eliminate the effect, one should first get rid of the cause².

This observation can be extended to mean the reverse order also. That is, if the ‘effect’ is not there, then surely there is no existence of ‘cause’ at all.

So, when one becomes wise and enlightened enough to realise the entrapping, deluding and transient nature of the comforts and pleasures of the material sense objects of this artificial world as well as the long term negative consequences that these would have on the person's spiritual well being and happiness, then one would apply one's intelligent mind to get rid of such things that would cause pain to him. He would have no desire for them. In other words, the 'cause' or 'Kaaran' is eliminated.

Thus, he would shun the illusive comforts and pleasures of this world altogether as if they did not exist at all. When this erudition takes hold, then naturally the 'effect' or 'Kaarya' is automatically eliminated—i.e. there will be no entrapments of any kind.

The wise person not only loses all interests in this world and its material objects along with the comforts and pleasures provided by them; both these things cease to exist at all for him for all practical purposes³ (48).

[Note—The relationship between Kaaran or cause and its Kaarya or effect can be understood by a simple example. For instance, if clay is the Kaaran, then the earthen pot is the Kaarya. This is because the pot is the effect of the presence of clay; had there been no clay there would have been no cause for the clay pot to come into being. Similarly, fire is the cause and the smoke is the effect. Therefore, if there is smoke then surely there must be some fire somewhere. If there is clay pot then surely there must be clay around. In other words, they are intricately woven into one another; they are inseparably related to one another; they are like the two poles of a magnet. The Kaarya-Kaaran effect has been explained in Shuk Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 42 of the Krishna Yajur Veda also.

²In other words, if one wishes to remain free from being trapped by the desire for obtaining material comforts and deriving pleasures from the perishable sense objects of this deluding and transient world then one would have to first get rid of the awareness of their presence and wipe off their memory from the mind. It is only then that the desires would automatically cease to exist. As long as the cause persists, the effect cannot be wished away.

³The 'effect' here refers to the charms of this deluding world along with its material comforts and sensual pleasures. No matter how alluring they might seem on the surface, they are actually thorns that would cause long term miseries and torments for the creature and rob him of his peace of mind and become hurdles in his path to spiritual liberation and deliverance. A wise and enlightened man realises that if he allows himself to be devoured by these sense objects then he would get sucked in their vortex, and salvation would elude him forever.

Similarly, the 'cause' here refers to the mind which has erroneously thought that the world really exists and its charms would provide real happiness to the person. So as soon as this erroneous perception is removed, as soon as the man realises the fact that real happiness and peace is not to be found in the sense objects but in spiritual upliftment and accessing the eternal fount of beatitude and felicity that is obtainable by Brahm-realisation, then obviously and naturally he would desist from falling prey to such enticements of the artificial world and strive to remove the very cause that has been at the root of all his delusions and miseries for him in the past. That is why the necessity of controlling of the mind has been constantly emphasised by the Upanishads.]

49. When this happens, the mind and intellect become cleansed and purified of all extraneous corrupting influences. With this Brahm oriented mind-intellect, the light of Brahm-realisation dawns. [For example, only when the sky is clear in the morning can one witness the glorious sun rise in the eastern sky, and not when the sky is overcast with

dark clouds. Here the dark clouds resemble ignorance and delusions that prevent the view of Brahm from manifesting itself on the intellectual horizon of the person.]

This state is the exalted, eclectic, sublime and divine state of self-realisation which cannot be defined and delineated by words. Here the aspirant would have witnessed his own pure truthful conscious ‘self’ in the form of Brahm (49).

50. When the spiritual aspirant has been diligently practicing the different tenets of Yoga philosophy as enumerated in this Upanishad, he reaches a certain stage in his spiritual endeavours when he can actually experience and witness the presence of the supreme transcendental universal Truth, the cosmic Consciousness known as the venerable Brahm, the only truth and reality in this creation in his own self, in his own Atma, as well as everywhere around him. Brahm is an entity that can be attained or approached or accessed only by personally experiencing and witnessing its divine presence (because it is subtle and sublime consciousness and not any gross perception that can be accessed by the mind or body).

‘The entire visible world is one or the other form of one non-dual Brahm, and there is nothing in it that is not Brahm; or, in other words, there is Brahm everywhere’—a wise and enlightened ascetic should cultivate this holistic and divine view of this world. He should see uniformity in existence and become blind towards artificial distinctions and illusive variations in it (because such distorted and surreal views of the world would not fit in well with the actual fact of its truthful form and real essence—which is the existence of one single cosmic entity known as Brahm which has uniformly manifested its self in all these myriad, varied and multifarious forms in which the visible world exists). This results in the elimination of all that is not the reality and truth.

Such auspicious views of Brahm and the world give immense sense of contentedness and bliss to the spiritual aspirant; it helps to stabilise his mind and its thought processes. A wise, erudite, sagacious, enlightened and Brahm-realised person is one who is firm in this conviction and established in this universal spiritual truth which keeps him eternally happy, contented and blissful. [Refer verse no. 43 in this context.] (50).

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SECTION 5

UPANISHADS OF THE ATHARVA VEDA

The Shantipaath of the Upanishads of the Atharva Veda: ‘OM salutations! The disciples who are studying the scriptures at the place of their Guru (teacher, moral preceptor, guide) remember the Gods and pray to them for the welfare and good of their teacher, their fellow students as well as the human race as a whole—“Oh Gods! Let us hear auspicious and noble things with our ears. Criticism of others, finding faults with them, useless gossip, cynicism, cursing and use of foul as well as abusive language, profanities, expletives and all other types of non-righteous, uncultured, uncivilised and unwarranted sinful words should not enter our ears. Let our lives be devoted to and focused on the Lord God! Let us spend our time in his worship and honour. Not only the ears, but let our eyes too see good things only. Let not our eyes be ever attracted towards or enchanted by any sight or scene that is inauspicious, unrighteous, un-virtuous, detestable, abhorable, corruptible and degrading, perverting or depraving for the mind-heart-intellect complex. In short, let our views and sights be pure. Let our body, every part of it, be able, strong and healthy so that we can be fit enough to praise, worship, honour, serve and revere the Lord God (because an unfit, diseased and decrepit body is a great burden and hindrance in life of the seeker/aspirant). Let our age and life not be spent in the gratification of the sense organs or enjoyment of the materialistic world, or be frittered away in indolence and lethargy. Our lives should be used for the work of the Lord God (i.e., we can do righteous and selfless deeds of all kinds). They whose fame is spread in all the direction, i.e., the king of Gods named Indra, the all-knowing Pusha, the bird who can eliminate/remove all sorrows, misers, distresses, troubles and tribulations of all kinds, i.e. Garud, the legendary eagle/heron, as well as the Lord of wisdom and intelligence, Lord Brihaspati—all of them are the various manifestations and extension of the Lord’s excellence, majesty, magnificent glories, stupendous powers and supreme dignity. Let them all sustain, enhance and nourish all that which is good for us. Their grace and kindness will give well-being and auspiciousness to all the creatures including us. Let all the torments pertaining to this existence be calmed down. [The so-called three ‘Traitaps’ are the torments that the creature is subjected to due to his body such as illness, old age; due to other worldly creatures such as fear from the king, thieves etc.; due to the malignant stars and opposed Gods.] Let us have peace. Let us have peace. Let us have peace.”’

The following Upanishads of the Atharva Veda that deal with the concept of “Yoga” have been narrated in this section: (A) Shandilya Upanishad; (B) Tripadvibhut Mahanarayan Upanishad, Canto 8, paragraph no. 8-12; and (C) Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 28, 48-51.

Some of the Upanishads narrated in this section of the book also have other philosophies interwoven in their texts. Since the focus of our current book is on the theme of “Yoga”, hence only those Cantos or parts of the relevant Upanishads are quoted here.

(V—A) Shandilya Upanishad

This Upanishad derives its name from sage Shandilya who approached the ancient sage Atharvan to learn the details of the various aspects of Yoga (meditation) and Brahm, the invisible but the divine and sublime Supreme Being. The knowledge was then passed on to the line of disciples of sage Shandilya who then named this Upanishad in the honour of their Guru.

The Upanishad has three Cantos of which the first one is the largest, occupies the greater part of the text, and deals with the concept of Yoga in a comprehensive manner.

Canto 1 has eleven sections and a total of ninety-seven verses. It deals comprehensively with the philosophy of Yoga and its practice. It explains the various terms associated with the philosophy of Yoga with a metaphysical perspective, and a reading would show how implementing these in practice can actually lead to an overall improvement in the life and personality of the practitioner.

In Canto 1, section 1 opens with sage Atharva telling sage Shandilya about the eight-fold path of Yoga, and then describes the ten aspects of Yam (self-restraint of the sense organs and the mind). Section 2 deals with the ten kinds of Niyams (spiritual orders and regulations). Section 3 outlines the eight Asanas (sitting postures) of Yoga. Section 4 is complicated and gives details about the various Naadis (nerves and veins), the Kundalini (the coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine, called the ‘serpent power’ because of its coiled nature and its latent dynamism), and the ten vital winds called the Prans, and it explains how these Naadis are de-clogged and activated with the help of the energy of the Kundalini and the vital winds, along with the process to do so. Section 5 deals with the eligibility for Yoga and then goes on to describe the preliminaries of Pranayam (breath control). Section 6 compliments the previous section and completes the discussion on Pranayam. Section 7 is dedicated to Hath Yoga and describes how to cleanse the blocked Naadis, the method of doing Pranayam, rules governing food during Yoga, various Bandhas (closure of body apertures) and Mudras (postures), and the manifold benefits of Yoga such as attainment of various Siddhis (mystical powers). Sections 8-9 describe the five kinds of Pratyahars (restraining the mind and withdrawing it from involvement with the sense organs) and Dharnas (convictions and beliefs). Section 10 narrates the two kinds of Dhyan (remembrance and concentration of the mind), while section 11 deals with the eclectic concept of Samadhi or total absorption in meditation.

The second and third Cantos primarily deal with the esoteric concept of Brahm. The second Canto is the shortest with only one section having six verses, while the third and the last Canto has two sections with twenty-one verses. Hence, there are in all fourteen sections and one hundred twenty-four verses. Now let us have a bird’s eye view of what the Upanishad deals with.

Canto 2 is pre-eminently a summary of Advaita Vedanta and deals with the eclectic concept of the non-dual Brahm, the Supreme Being and the cosmic

Consciousness which is the universal theme in all the Upanishads. It outlines some of the unique qualities of Brahm and asserts that it is a divine entity that cannot be defined, is beyond the faculty of speech and the comprehension of the mind, and is invisible but nevertheless omnipresent in this creation.

Finally, Canto 3 builds up on the theme of Brahm and in section 1 answers the question as to how the one and non-dual Brahm can assume the form of this multifaceted world of such immense diversity. Section 2 elucidates the different meanings of the term Brahm.

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Canto 1/Section 1

[This section opens with sage Atharvan telling sage Shandilya about the eight-fold path of Yoga, and then describes the ten aspects of Yama which is self-restraint of the sense organs and the mind. It is in the form of a prose and describes all the terms in a holistic manner.]

1. Once upon a time, sage Shandilya¹ approached the great ancient sage Atharva² and requested him to preach him on the various aspects of Yoga as a means of realizing the Atma, the soul or the pure consciousness which is also called the ‘self’.

Shandilya requested sage Atharva, ‘Oh Lord! Please teach me about the eight-fold path of Yoga that can help me to realise the Atma and its essence.’

The wise and enlightened sage Atharva replied, ‘Oh great sage! Yoga (meditation and contemplation) has eight limbs or aspects or branches, called ‘Ashtaanga Yoga’³. These are Yam (self-control), Niyam (observation of spiritual laws or rules), Aasan (sitting postures), Pranayam (breath control), Pratyahar (restraint of the mind), Dharna (belief), Dhyana (concentration of mind; remembrance) and Samadhi (trance-like state of permanence in Yoga).

Yam and Niyam are of ten types each, Aasans are of eight types, Pranayam has three phases, both Pratyahar and Dharna have five types each, Dhyana is of two types, while Samadhi is of only one type with no variations.

The ten types or aspects of Yam are the following—Ahinsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (abstinence, continence, celibacy), Daya (mercy), Saralta (simplicity, humility), Kshama (forgiveness), Dhairya (patience), Alpa-ahar (moderation in eating), and Pavitra (purity and cleanliness).

[Now, each of these terms are being defined—] ‘Ahinsa’ means not harming or causing pain to any creature, at any time, and by any means—not by one’s thoughts or involvement of the mind in any way, not by speech or words, not by the body and its actions. [That is, non-violence should be holistic and comprehensive in nature—it is not limited to only avoiding physical cruelty or aggression but also includes mental and verbal aspects.]

‘Satya’ means to tell, honestly, truthfully and with the greatest sincerity one can have, whatever is for the good and true welfare of the other person, whether he likes it or not. This would involve the mind and its thoughts, the speech and the words used to tell the truth, and the body that implements this truth in the shape of deeds done by it and

actions taken by it. [That is, Satya involves not telling things simply because they might appear pleasing to the hearer, or said out of some vested interest at stake, but to say things which are genuinely in the interest and long-term good of the other person. Such things might be unpleasant to hear in the beginning and might even cause rebuke or ill-will for the speaker of the truth, but they give the speaker or the advisor great mental and spiritual satisfaction for having spoken the truth without deceit or fear, besides helping to create positive vibrations around him, and ushering in an atmosphere of trust and brotherhood.]

‘Asteya’ broadly means non-stealing, and it includes the idea of keeping one’s self aloof from the wealth of others, of not being attracted towards such assets that do not rightly belong to one’s own self, of eyeing the wealth of others with envy and jealousy, of having a greed for them, yearning for them, and waiting for an opportunity to either harm them or deprive the other person of his possessions, or usurping and grabbing the assets rightfully belonging to others by any crooked or deceitful means one can think of. This neutrality and non-lusting must be genuine and sincere, and should involve one’s mind and its thoughts, one’s speech, as well as one’s body and the deeds done by it or actions taken by it. One should be sincere in not being tempted by the wealth of others, and of course this would involve the mind and the sub-conscious which must be duly trained and cultured. [That is, one must never be envious of other people’s prosperity and acquisitions; one must never allow the mind to ever contemplate of harming these assets or plan to grab them by force or conceit. Similarly, one must never allow the speech to ever utter a word of jealousy and say anything that might harm these assets simply because they belong to others, or create prejudice against the rightful possessor of such assets. One must not allow the body to do anything that would in anyway, directly or indirectly, cause harm to the assets that belong to others. Since the general meaning of the word ‘Asteya’ is ‘non-stealing’ it follows that even mental greed or yearning for something that belongs to others, and imagining how good it would have been if it belonged to me, is as good as the actual stealing of it. When the Upanishads talk about implementation of any principle, they imply a wholesome attitude and a holistic approach towards it, and not only physical aspect of it such as its literal implementation which is devoid of the spirit of the doctrine. Not physically able to steal anything but be mentally obsessive about it is as good as actually stealing it. In other words, the purity of mind, sub-conscious and intellect are as important as the physical act of abstaining from stealing.]

‘Brahmacharya’ is to abstain from all sexual activities or any kind of indulgences and unrestrained behaviour involving the mind, the speech as well as the physical body and its sense organs under all circumstances. [That is, mere observance of physical celibacy is not enough. One must observe total control over the mind and its faculties so that they are not allowed even to think of any lustful subject or indulge in any inauspicious, unrighteous, unethical, immoral and improper thoughts related to sense gratification or attractions of the material sense objects of the world. One must never think or talk about sensual subjects that arouse passions and disturb the tranquility of the mind. One must never allow the gross organs of the body to be attracted towards objects of self gratification, or of sensual pleasures and comforts. In short, all sensual attractions, all forms of indulgences, all instances of temptations, all examples of self-gratification, and all sorts of unrestrained behaviour of the mind, the speech and the body are covered

by the term Brahmacharya. It means total and comprehensive self-restraint or self-control in all spheres of life, and not just of the organs of sensual pleasures.]

‘Daya’ refers to having compassion and mercy towards all the creatures, to be graceful and kind towards all, from the lowly and the humblest to the highest and the exalted.

‘Aarjav’ or ‘Dhairya’ means to have exemplary tolerance, fortitude, courage, forbearance, resilience and patience of mind, to be immensely steady in one’s thoughts and behaviour, to restrict one’s speech and desist from speaking any wrong word against anyone or to anyone, and to keep the body under strict control and not react under any kind of provocation or situation, whether favourable or unfavourable. It implies that a person remains completely neutral and equanimous when faced by favourable and expected circumstances, or by unfavourable and untoward ones.

‘Kshama’ implies to be truly forgiving and un-affected by any offense caused by the other person, to bear with stoic calmness, equanimity, forbearance and a sense of neutrality all sorts of behaviours one has to face from others, whether done inadvertently or purposely, whether such behaviour is favourable or unfavourable, whether it is likable or not. One must be exemplarily calm, unruffled and be forgiving towards others, whether one is praised and honoured by them, or criticized and humiliated by them. One must be sincerely forgiving for any kind of mischief, any kind of misdeed, kind of transgression, any kind of provocative behaviour, any sort of insults, aspersions, asides or insinuations inflicted or cast upon him by other person, directly or indirectly, or by situations created by his adversary that lead to him being subjected to humiliation and insult. Kshama involves remaining unruffled and completely calm, both emotionally as well as sentimentally, under all prevailing situations and under all instigations. One must not harbour any animosity, ill-will, a sense of grievance, a feeling of hatred or a desire for revenge against anyone, or for any deed done by the latter, which has in any way harmed one’s own interest or even has been a cause of annoyance for him. [Therefore we see that Kshama, Daya and Dhairya go hand in hand; one must accompany the other to give meaning to what is being said in this great Upanishad. It has already been emphasized that a wholesome approach is needed when one reads the Upanishad and hopes to benefit from this eclectic and grand philosophy promoted by it.]

‘Dhriti’ is having equanimity, neutrality, fortitude, firmness and steadiness of mind under all circumstances, even when one is subjected to immense emotional turmoil, both of the positive kind such as having happiness and joys, as well as of the negative kind such as being subjected to immense anguish and pain. [That is, one must remain unruffled and maintain one’s poise and calm under opposing situations—such as the one when he suffers from some great financial loss or loses his dear and near ones on the one hand, or when he begets some great fortune or meets his beloved ones unexpectedly on the other hand.]

‘Alpa-ahar’ is to eat with moderation or restraint. It implies eating only so much as to keep one-fourth of the stomach empty. It also implies eating such things that are soothing for the system and non-irritating by nature, things that are invigorating and energizing for the body. Such eatables are foods that are soothing for the digestive system, as well as sweet, pleasant and comforting for the body in general. Some of such eatables are clarified butter (Ghee) of the best quality, unadulterated milk, and other such things.

‘Shauch’ means to be clean and purified both externally as well as internally. While external cleanliness can be done by rubbing the body with clay and washing off the dirt with water, internal cleanliness and purity is achieved by keeping the mind, the sub-conscious and the intellect free from all sorts of taints, corruptions and negativities, and instead concentrating their efforts towards auspicious and righteous endeavours such as on spiritualism and attainment of the Truth. [Both sorts of cleaning are necessary. One should keep the physical body clean because it is the residence of the Atma, the pure ‘self’, and if the residence is dirty and filthy it would create a negative environment for the Atma, causing the latter restlessness and having a negative impact on its nature. Further, the body is regarded as the temple of the Lord because this Atma is a miniature form of the cosmic Atma known as the ‘Parmatma’, the Supreme Being. Just like a man keeps his place of worship, the ‘shrine’, physically clean so as to maintain its sanctity, it is equally important to keep one’s body clean as it is the abode of the ‘personal deity’ known as the Atma. But this body is driven by the mind and its various faculties, and therefore to ensure that the personal shrine of the Atma in the form of the physical body is able to maintain its sanctity and credibility it is imperative to keep the internal apparatus clean and uncorrupt. If the mind and its components are not clean then no matter how clean the external body may be it is of no good to the spiritual aspirant, for sooner rather than latter the body would fall prey to the many temptations of the corrupt world and its attending delusions. Therefore, all efforts of the mind should be diverted away from the falsehoods of the material world of the sense objects and focused on the Atma and the universal truth of the conscious ‘self’.] (1).

[Note—¹*Shandilya*—The word ‘Shandilya/Shandilya’ means the son of sage Shandila. In ancient scriptures the name of sage Shandilya appears at various places, the earliest reference being in the Shatpath Brahman (9/4/4/17; 10/1/4/10) which belongs to the Shukla Yajur Veda. It is believed that it was compiled around 3000 B.C.

Shandilya was a great authority of the fire ritual, and in fact the fire which he worshipped has been named after him as Shaandila. He was a pupil of sage Atharva from whom he learned this present Shandilya Upanishad, and his main disciple was named Kushri. According to other lists of lineage, his teachers included Vaatsay, Kaishorya, Kashyap, Vaishtapureya, Gautam etc.

Since the Shandilya Upanishad was taught to him by sage Atharva, it obviously follows that the two sages were contemporaries of each other.

The Chandogya Upanishad also refers to sage Shandilya in its Canto 3, section 14 wherein the sage taught the knowledge of the divine Being known as Brahman which have a clear resonance in Cantos 2 and 3 of our present Shandilya Upanishad.

The great epic Mahabharata mentions sage Shandilya many times as being a sage who attended the court of king Yudishthira (Sabhapurva, 4/17). He had propounded the laws governing giving of donations (Mahabharata, Anushasanpurva, 65/19).

Sage Shandilya is credited with the composition of the treatise on Bhakti or devotion, called the Bhakti-sutras—the essential principles that govern the attainment of Bhakti. Besides it, the Shandilya Upanishad as well as Shandilya Sanhita are also attributed to him.

According to the Ram Rahasya Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 1, of the Atharva Veda, he was one of the sages who had approached Hanuman, the wisest, the highly enlightened and the most dedicated devotee of Lord Ram, to enquire about the profound metaphysical philosophy related to the Lord.

²*Atharva*— Sage Atharva is the ancient sage who first revealed the fourth Veda called after his name, i.e. the Atharva Veda. He was the son of Brahma, the creator,

according to Vedic mythology. He first brought down fire from the heaven to earth, and hence was the first sage to have propagated the worship of the sacred fire. The word 'athar' is the absolute word for the fire element, and hence this sage was named 'Atharvan' to commemorate this auspicious deed of his. He made the supreme Fire God, who is synonymous with the dynamic powers of the Supreme Being called Brahm, make this earth as his habitat, thereby paving the way for the forthcoming generations to utilise the stupendous powers and potentials of this fire element in practical terms here on earth itself. Since he brought the fire down on earth, he was also the first to initiate the process of worship of this element, both in its sublime form as the Fire God and its more tangible and gross form as the sacred fire worshipped during formal ritual of the fire sacrifice as well as in other informal forms as done by various sections of society in their daily lives. In fact, sage Atharva was considered as the Fire manifested, so pure and holy he was.

When he brought the Fire God in the form of the sacred fire from the heaven, he offered Soma (the extract of a herb called Som and used as a holy and sanctified liquid-offering meant to be offered to the Gods for their eternal life and sustenance) to him to please him and to show respect to this God who was now the guest of honour for Atharvan. In order to please him further while offering Soma to him, the sage chanted the hymns that he had learned from his father, the creator Brahma. This started the practice of offering of Soma to the sacred fire during the ritual of the fire sacrifice along with the chanting of hymns of the Atharva Veda.

According to the Purans, his earthly wife was Shanti, the daughter of Kardama Prajapati. He is regarded as a personification of the Fire God, and is often invoked in conjunction with another great sage named Angiras (who was another son of Brahma). In this form he is called 'Atharvangiras' (Atharvan + Angiras) and is regarded as the father of the Fire God to commemorate the fact that these two sages are responsible for the honour and exalted position that the Fire God occupies in the pantheon of Gods, and also the fact that they were responsible for propagating the worship of the fire as the most holy and the most sacred form of worship of the Supreme Being.

According to Mundakopanishad of Atharva Veda, Mundak 1, section 1, verse no. 1, Atharva is the eldest of the six mental-born sons of Brahma. Brahma had first taught him the best metaphysical knowledge called Brahm Vidya, and Atharva had later taught it to Angiras, his younger brother and first disciple (Mundakopanishad, 1/1/2). The descendents of Atharva came to be known as Atharvaan, and those of Angira as Aangiras. One of the many important sages preached by sage Atharva was Shandilya/Shandilya, son of sage Shandila, and this teaching is contained in the present Upanishad called the 'Shandilya Upanishad' dedicated to sage Shandilya in his memory.

Since sage Atharva had started the practice of worship of the Fire God in the form of the sacred fire of the fire sacrifice and had used the initial Mantras taught to him by his father Brahma, the Mantra of this Veda came to be known after him as 'Atharvaa', and since his brother Angira had carried forward this practice started by his older brother by actually invoking these Mantras during formal sacrifices held from time to time after the first exercise, the Mantras came to be known after both the brothers 'Atharvaangiras'.

The Mantras of the Atharva Veda which were initially pronounced by sage Atharva came to be known after him as 'Atharvaa' or 'Atharva', and those by the two brothers jointly as 'Atharvaangiras'.

According to Mahabharat, the great epic related to Lord Krishna penned by sage Veda Vyas, Atharva had searched out the fire concealed in the ocean (Mahabharat, Vanparva, 222).

Some of the Upanishads taught by sage Atharva are the following—Atharva Veda's Prashna Upanishad, Mundak Upanishad, Atharva Shikha Upanishad and Shandilya Upanishad—all belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition.

Since he was the worshipper of the Fire God, it is natural for him to worship the Sun God as a manifestation not only of the supreme Brahm but also of the Fire God. The hymns dedicated to the Sun God as contained in the Surya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, which is the seventh Upanishad of this Veda, is attributed jointly to sages Angira and Atharva. Refer verse no. 1 of Surya Upanishad.

³*Astanga Yoga*—Some of the Upanishads that deal with this philosophy of Yoga are the following—(i) Krishna Yajur Veda = *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse nos. 11-14; (ii) Atharva Veda = *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 2.

The chief exponent of Yoga was sage Patanjali, and he had crystallized the principles of Yoga in his Yog Sutra which contains 185 Sutras or formulas or keys for doing Yoga. Yoga is one of the 6 schools of Indian Hindu Philosophy. We shall now briefly see the essential elements of Patanjali's Yog Sutra.

Patanjali is considered the grandfather of Yoga. Here we shall see in brief his basic ideas of Yoga, and we would observe that they are more philosophical in their content, import and application than the mere physical exercise involved in doing routine Yoga (meditation). Patanjali's philosophies on Yoga are universally applicable to all the Upanishads, whether they are mere philosophical treatises or the ones dealing with only meditation exercises in detail. In the context of Upanishads on Yoga, let us have a brief glimpse on what sage 'Patanjali', has to say on the subject.

'Patanjali' has enumerated eight-fold path of Yoga, called Ashtanga Yoga—or the Yoga with 8 limbs or branches. Each phase of his prescription is designed to enable the practitioner to attain the supreme consciousness by quieting the mind and merging it with the truth which is universal, all pervading and infinite.]

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Canto 1/Section 2

[This section describes the ten types of Niyams or observances. Like the previous section, it is also in the pattern of a prose.]

1. The term 'Niyam' (literally meaning certain rules and regulations that one is strictly expected to follow in order to be successful in one's endeavour) applies to the following observances—Tapa (austerity, penance and sufferance for some noble and auspicious cause), Santosh (contentedness), Astik (to be a believer), Daan (to give charity and make alms), Ishwar-poojan (worship of God), Siddhanta-srawan (listening to the tenets and doctrines of the scriptures being explained), Hri (shame, prudence, modesty and self-respect), Mati (thoughts, intellect, sense, understanding, inclination, convictions, desires of the mind, and being mindfulness of one's duties and ethical behaviour), Japa (repetition of Mantras), and Vrat (religious fasting, observing austerity, keeping righteous vows and strict self-control or self-restraint).

[Now, each of these terms would be explained in a holistic way.] The term 'Tapa' in the context of Yoga (meditation) is to observe various religious sacraments such as the 'Krischa Chandrayan¹' which helps the body to become thin, energized, fit, reactivated and detoxified, as well as shed its unnecessary flab and burden of ailments.

'Santosh' means to be satisfied and contented with whatever is available by providence, and never to greed or yearn or wish for more.

‘Aastik’ (believing) implies that one should sincerely believe in what the Vedas have said about religion and other spiritual matters.

‘Daan’ is to give alms to the poor, make donations and charities to the deserving, with due respect to the dignity and self respect of the recipient or the beneficiary, without expecting anything in return. These charities and donations must be made out of the wealth that has been obtained by rightful means, and which rightly belongs to the person who gives such alms, or makes donations or charities. [In other words, if charities are made to humiliate others, to demean their spirits and social standing, to show them that they are underprivileged, unfortunate and inferior to the donor, to create a situation when the other members of the society become lazy, indolent and unproductive in the expectation of getting largesse without making efforts to meet their requirements by doing deeds, or to show off one’s wealth and majesty, or to reap some sort of worldly fame and name as a philanthropic person etc., or if such charities or alms are made out of assets acquired by unlawful and unethical means—then such alms, charities and donations are deemed to be null and void.]

‘Ishwar-poojan’ is to honour, to offer respectful worship and to pay sincere obeisance to the Supreme Being in his various manifestations, such as Lord Vishnu (the second of the Trinity Gods, the sustainer and protector of creation, and the Lord who had manifested as various incarnations on earth) and Lord Shiva (the third of the Trinity Gods, the concluder of creation and the patron God of ascetics) amongst others. Such worship and honour should be done cheerfully, with great devotion and faith, and by following the proper sanctified method for this purpose as narrated in the scriptures.

‘Siddhanta-srawan’ is to attentively hear the tenets and doctrines of the Vedas and the Upanishads being explained by those who are well-versed in them, those who are highly erudite and extremely learned in the finer nuances and intricacies of these great scriptures.

‘Hri’ (shame, modesty, self-respect and dignity) is to feel ashamed at one’s own self for doing something that goes against the eclectic doctrines of Dharma (ethics, morality, righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety and correct thought and action). Therefore, it also entails that one avoids doing anything that is regarded as unholy, lowly, demeaning, degrading and despicable by the Vedas as well as by traditional wisdom and universally accepted convention.

‘Mati’ (thoughts, intellect, sense, understanding, inclination, convictions, desires of the mind, and being mindful of one’s duties and ethical behaviour) is to sincerely wish and have an inborn inclination to follow the tenets of the Vedas. It would include proper training of the mind-intellect apparatus to think and contemplate rightly, correctly and with a positive attitude about the right things and in a right perspective. One should therefore turn away from those things that are demeaning and degrading for the soul, and which undermine the exalted stature of one’s divine ‘self’.

‘Japa’ is to honestly practice (repeat and meditate upon) the Vedic Mantra (hymn) that has been prescribed by one’s Guru (moral preceptor). Japa is done in two ways—one is verbal or audible Japa, and the other is non-verbal or mental or silent Japa. The mental or silent form of Japa is done by repeating the Mantra mentally in a silent mode without uttering a word audibly, and involves concentration of the mind and turning its thoughts inwards. The verbal or audible form of Japa is again of two types—viz. one that is done loudly, and the other that is simply muttered. The Japa done while muttering the Mantras

silently is thousands of times more beneficial than doing Japa loudly, and mental Japa that is done silently without even opening the lips is far better than even the one done by slowly muttering the words, and it is multiple times more beneficial.

‘Vrat’ (observance of religious vows) is to diligently, steadfastly, honestly, consistently and regularly follow the different eclectic principles, the doctrines and the tenets of the Vedas and the Upanishads—to avoid things that are proscribed by them, and do things that are prescribed by them (1).

[Note—¹The word ‘Chandrayan’ means ‘following the phase of the moon’, while ‘Krischa’ means to become thin and lean. Hence, the term *Krischa Chandrayan* means to make the body thin by strictly restricting the diet according to the established system of doing the Chandrayan Vrat. Hence it involves restricting one’s food intake by strictly following the phase of the moon—reducing it gradually during the waning phase of the moon, and increasing it in a step-by-step reverse order in which it was reduced during the waxing phase of the moon.

The Hindu scriptures have prescribed a number of methods of atonement for one’s misdeeds and expiations for sins. The Chandrayan is the universal penance for expiation of almost any kind of sin—especially where no specific remedy is prescribed.

It is so-called as during this exercise one follows the phase of the moon in his eating habits. Starting with fifteen morsels of food on the full-moon day it is gradually reduced by one morsel per day till the new-moon day when not a single morsel is eaten by the aspirant. Then from this day onwards, one morsel per day is increased till the full-moon day when once again he eats fifteen morsels. This is one cycle of the penance. It can be repeated as many times as desired according to the intensity of the sin to be atoned for. This penance is also called ‘Pipillikaamadhyā’ or ‘middle of an ant’ exercise because it starts and ends with full fifteen morsels of food with nil food in the middle.

There is a variation of the Chandrayan described above. In the modified version, the penance is started with one morsel on the full-moon day, gradually increased to fifteen morsels on the new-moon day and then progressively reduced by one morsel each day till the full-moon day when once again only one morsel is eaten. This is called ‘Yavamādhyā’ or ‘middle of the wheat grain’—as this grain is thickest at the center and tapers off at the two ends.

In the third variation, eight morsel of food is eaten each day for a month’s time. This is called ‘Yati-Chandrayan’—or the Chandrayan that is prescribed for wandering ascetics who beg for food for sustenance.

The size of the morsel of food is approximately that of a big myrobalan fruit. A person who undertakes the penance called Chandrayan should tonsure the head, do initial fasting as a preparatory step, offer libations of clarified butter (Ghee) and water to the Gods, consecrate the food before eating it, and worship the Moon God.]

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Canto 1/Section 3

[This section has fifteen verses and narrates the eight types of Aasans (sitting postures) of Yoga (meditation). Refer also to (i) Shukla Yajur Veda = Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 35-52 describes seventeen Aasans; Mandal Brahmin, Brahman 1, section 1, verse no. 5. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 15-17; Yog Kundali, Canto 1, verse nos. 5-6; Yog Tattva, verse no. 29; Yog Shikha,

Canto 1, verse no. 84. (iii) Sam Veda = Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-13. (iv) Atharva Veda = Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 87.]

1. There are said to be eight principal Aasans or sitting postures to be adopted while doing Yoga or meditation and contemplation. These are the following—Swastik, Gomukh (to sit like a cow), Padma (the lotus posture), Vir (the warrior's posture), Singh (to sit like a lion), Bhadra (to sit like a gentleman), Mukta (to free one's self from the sensual urges) and Mayur (to sit like a peacock).

In the Swastik-aasan, the two legs are folded in from the knee joint and the soles of the feet are placed on the knees of the opposite side. With the legs thus bent and the soles resting on the knees, the practitioner sits erect with a straight back (1).

2. The Gomukh-aasan is to sit like a cow. This is accomplished by bending the body forward and folding in the two legs from the knees so that the left side of the buttock rests upon the right ankle joint and the right buttock on the left ankle joint. [Obviously, to sit like the cow, the body would be in a horizontal position and while the hind part rests upon the folded-in legs as mentioned above, the front part would rest upon the hands that too would need to be bent in at the elbows with the palms of the hand lying flat on the ground in the front. The head is held slightly elevated as compared to the horizontal position of the backbone.] (2).

3. Oh Shandilya! The Padmasan is to sit like a lotus. In this posture, the legs are folded in from the knees and the soles are placed on the thighs of the opposite side. Then the body is held erect and the big toes are grasped by the hands of the opposite sides. [In other word, first the left sole is placed on the right thigh for instance, and then its big toe is clasped by the left hand. The same thing is done with the right sole and its big toe. As a result, the hands would need to be crossed over each other in front of the navel. The rest of the body meanwhile is held ram-rod straight.] (3).

4. The Virasan (to sit like a warrior) is done by folding in the two legs from the knee and resting the hind parts of the two thighs on the calves of the same side. The upper part of the body, from the hip-bone upwards, is held erect. [Hence, the body rests on the folded-in legs with the two knees touching the ground in the front and the hind part of the body supported by the feet held parallel to the backbone so that its their ankle joints touch and extend support to the rear of the buttock while the toes lie flat on the ground, pointing forwards towards the knees so as to form a base for keeping the body in balance. It is a modified version of kneeling down where the calf and the posterior part of the thigh are at right angles to each others, because in the case of the Viraasan posture the weight of the body lies not on the knees but on the feet that are tucked below the buttocks with their soles pointing outwards, the ankle joint pressing against the lower end of the buttock, and the toes flat against the ground, so as to act as a prop that supports the hip and the backbone from the rear of the body.]

5-6. Now, Singhasan is being described. [It is how a lion sits. It is modification of the Virasan described in verse no. 4.] The right ankle joint is made to touch the left ankle joint, and the palms are placed on the knees of the respective side with their fingers open

and spread out over the knees like a palm-fan. [Obviously, to sit in this way is to adopt the Virasan posture with two caveats—one is that the two ankle joints should touch each other as they support the buttock and backbone at the rear side of the body as described in the formation of the Viraasan posture, and the other is that the open palms of the two hands should be placed, facing down, open the two bent knees, with their fingers spread out on the knees like a palm-fan.] [5]

The practitioner should sit still with the mouth open and eyesight fixed or focused on the tip of the nose. [In other words, he must stare straight ahead at a point directly in front of the nose.]

This is called the ‘Singh-Aasan’ and acclaimed ascetics always laud it. [6] (5-6).

7. The Siddhasan is adopted by pressing the anus with the left leg (i.e. by its ankle joint) and placing the right leg on the testicles (i.e. pressing the groins with the ankle joint of the right leg). The eye sight is fixed at a point between the two eyebrows. [Though not mentioned, the backbone and the head are held straight in a line in this case as well.] (7).

8. To sit in the Bhadrasan, the two ankle joints are tucked below the testicles and pressed against them, while the rear end of the two legs (i.e. the soles of the feet) are clasped firmly by the hands (taken behind the body). [For doing this, the legs would have to touch each other, bent at the knees and folded in, with the calf pressed against the posterior of the respective thigh. This would enable the ankle joint to be pressed against the testicles from below. Then the hands are taken back and the soles clasped from the rear of the body. Meanwhile, the spine, neck and the head are to be held straight in a line.]

This Bhadrasan is able to overcome the bad affects of all sorts of poison and get rid of different kind of diseases (8).

9. To sit in a Muktasana posture, the suture running along the central part of the testicles is pressed from the below by the left ankle joint (by folding in the left leg), and then this ankle joint is pressed by the right ankle joint (by folding in the right leg). [It is a variation of the Bhadrasana posture. Whereas in the latter case the two ankle joints are held close to each other, side-by-side, and press the testicles simultaneously from below, in the present case of the Muktasana the testicles are pressed at the center from below by only the ankle joint of the left leg and then this ankle joint is further pressed by the ankle joint of the right leg. The back and the neck are however held erect in this case as well.] (9).

10-11. The Mayurasana (literally, to sit like a peacock) entails putting the palms flat on the ground, pressing the elbows against the abdomen on either side of the navel, and then balancing the body in a horizontal plane with the hands and open palms resting flat on the ground to act as pedestals. [10] In this posture, the head and the legs are turned upwards and away from the ground. The body is held parallel to the ground and is like a log of wood that is supported by two pedestals that are formed by the forearms and the palms. This posture resembles the outline features of a peacock.

This ‘Mayurasana’ has the potential to destroy all sins. [11] (10-11).

12. By practicing these Aasanas all the diseases present in the body are eliminated along with all the toxins or other poisonous elements that may be present inside the body. [That

is, these physical exercises help to revitalize and re-energise the body, detoxify it and rejuvenate it.] (12).

13. If a man is unable to follow any one of the rigid Aasans described above, he should then adopt any sitting posture that is convenient to him. In other words, the Aasans are to be calibrated according to the needs and convenience of the practitioner of Yoga (13).

[Note—This is very important and indicates that the Upanishads do not prescribe the rigidity of the Aasans as a means of inflicting torture on the aspirant. The toughness of the Aasans is based on the age-old wisdom that the more severe the ailment the equal severe is its remedy to affect a cure. Even modern medicine accepts that the potency of the medicine and the duration of the treatment is directly proportionate to the disease and its severity. But if any of the Aasans cause stress or distress to the practitioner then it would be counter-productive and hence should be avoided. The main idea is to sit calmly and steadily with a focused mind and controlled body, to focus on meditation and contemplation, to rein in the restless and wayward mind along with the equally restless body and its wayward sense organs. If this is accomplished by other means or Aasans than the ones mentioned in this section, then all is well and good. It is no sense in doing one of these Aasans with the body being subjected to such inconvenience that it remains fidgety, and the mind on its edge.]

14. An aspirant or practitioner who has successfully mastered the technique of these Aasans should be deemed to have conquered or obtain control over all the three worlds¹ (14).

[Note—¹The three worlds usually refer to the terrestrial world, the lower heavens and the upper heavens, or the heavens and the nether world. In brief, he is able to exercise his control over all spheres of life. From the metaphysical perspective it means that he can control his involvement with the physical material world during the waking state of consciousness called the Jagrat state, he can control his involvement with the world of dreams during the dreaming state of consciousness called the Swapna state, and he can even control his deep sleep state of consciousness called the Sushupta state. In other words, he is a self-realised person whose Atma, whose ‘true self’ which is pure and uncorrupt Consciousness, has become awakened and vigilant. No delusions of any sort, whether pertaining to the physical world or the imaginary world of dreams or to the neutral world of indifference would ever move him or affect his composure under any circumstance.]

15. When one has successfully observed the various principles of Yam and Niyam (as describes in sections 1 and 2 above) and mastered the art of doing various Aasans (as described in verse nos. 1-11 of this present section no. 3), he should then endeavour to practice ‘Pranayam’ or breath control exercises. By practicing it, the Naadis (various tubular ducts in the body; the nerves, veins and other ducts that carry life-forces in the body) are cleaned and detoxified, thereby revitalizing and re-energizing them (15).

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Canto 1/Section 4

[This section deals with three important concepts pertaining to Yoga—(i) one is the Naadi, or the various tubular ducts in the body through which all the life forces flow

inside the creature's body, and how to clean, de-clog, re-vitalise and re-activate them, (ii) the other is the Kundalini which is a coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine, and (iii) the third is the Vital Winds or Prans present inside the body that keeps it alive and active.

The Upanishads that deal with *Naadis* are the following—(i) Sam Veda's Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 5-22 ½, 35-42, 46-47, Canto 5; and Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 15-21. (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 67-76, 88-89, 99; Subal Upanishad, Canto 9 (which elaborately describes the relationship between Naadi, the vital winds and the sense organs). (iii) Krishna Yajur Veda's Kshuriko, verse nos. 8-20; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 61 (consciousness moves in Naadis during sleep), Canto 5, verse nos. 22-31, 54, 67; Yog Tattva Upanishad; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 50-60; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 17-27, Canto 6, verse nos. 4-19, 22, 41-47; Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 10-18 in relation with the activation of the Kundalini (which is the spiral dynamic energy center at the base of the spine) and doing Pranayam (breath control). (iv) Atharva Veda's Prashna Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 6; Mundak Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 2, section 2, verse no. 6; Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 4, verse nos. 1, 9-11; Bhavana Upanishad, verse no. 2, stanza no. 20 (it lists fourteen main Naadis).

The Upanishads that deal with *Kundalini* and its activation are the following—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda's Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 7-8, 43-46, 65-74, 76, 82-84; Dhyanbindu Upanishad, verse no. 66-69; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 82-139; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 81-84. (b) Sam Veda's Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 36-39. (c) Atharva Veda's Bhavana Upanishad, verse no. 2, stanza no 12.

The Upanishads that describe the *vital winds or Prans* are the following—(i) Sam Veda—(a) Chandogya Upanishad in its Canto 3, sections 13; Canto 5, section 1, verse nos. 1-15; Canto 5, sections 19-23 (describes how the five winds are satisfied; it also enumerates the Mantras pertaining to the five Prans); and Canto 7, section 15, verse no. 1; (b) Jabal Darshan panishad, Canto 4, verse no.23-24; (c) Maitrayanu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6-7 (which describes the functions of these winds). (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda—(a) Subalo Upanishad, Canto 9, verse no.1-14; (b) Paingalo-panishad, canto 2, verse no.3; (c) Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 5, 8-9; Canto 2, verse nos. 54, 77-87; (d) Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahman 9, verse no. 26; Canto 4, Brahman 2, verse no. 4; Canto 4, Brahman 1, verse no. 3; Canto 5, Brahman 13; Canto 6, Brahman 1. (iii) Krishna Yajur Veda—(a) Dhyanbindu Upanishad, verse nos. 55^{1/2}-60, 95-100; (b) Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 28; (c) Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 166; (d) Amritnado-panishad, verse no. 33-38; (e) Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 17-19; (f) Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 165 and Canto 5, verse no. 2; (g) Taittiriya Upanishad, Valli 3, Anuvak 3, 7; (h) Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 10; (i) Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 2 (especially describes the three methods to control the Prans); (j) Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse nos. 11-12, 14-18 (which describe the fingers that are directly related to the five principal winds and the Mantras of these winds). (iv) Atharva Veda—(a) Prashna Upanishad, Canto 2-3; Mundak Upanishad, Canto 3, section 1, verse no. 4; Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 4,

verse no. 12-13; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 25-32, 50-53 (its verse nos. 52-53 avers that for a self-realised ascetic, the terms Pran and consciousness are the same). (v) These vital winds have also been elucidated upon in sage Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no. 38-39.]

1. Sage Shandilya asked sage Atharva, 'Oh Lord! What is the way to clean (purify, de-clog and revitalize) the Naadis? How many Naadis are there (in the body)? How were they created? How many vital winds flow in them? Where are they located? What are their functions? In short, please enlighten me about all the things worth knowing in this body.' (1).

2-3. Sage Atharva replied, 'This body measures ninety-six fingers in length. The Pran or vital winds are longer by twelve fingers as compared to the length of the body. A practitioner of Yoga or meditation who is able to establish a synergy or compatibility between the vital winds and the fire element that is inherently present inside the body is called a skilled ascetic and a successful practitioner of Yoga.

[The wind is usually more forceful and powerful than the fire element as a strong wind blowing fiercely can blow out even a raging fire. If the latent fire in the body is weakened, it results in low heat, strength, vitality and energy levels. This manifests in many ways—such as low appetite and weak digestion, low vision and inability to perform mental tasks requiring constant supply of energy, lethargic bowel movement and poor circulation of blood, low vitality and lack of animal heat, and such other vital signs of life that depend upon heat and energy inherent in the fire element. Therefore it is necessary to keep the vital winds under control so that the life-giving fire is not suppressed or blown out completely. Since the vital winds which also sustain life and are synonymous with life are equally important as the fire element, a proper balance is to be struck between the two so that one does not prove inimical to the other but exist in a cooperative manner to help the body function in prime shape. In order to bring this about, both the wind element and the fire element are to be in equal intensity, or the wind element should be a notch less powerful than the fire element. This is because if the fire element is active and strong enough, it would not only keep the body warm and sufficiently energized but also consequentially keep the winds active and energized by keeping them warm. Cold wind is counterproductive to life while warm wind fosters life.] (2-3).

4. The location of the fire element in the body of humans is like a triangle which is glowing and radiant as a piece of hot, molten gold.

In four-footed creatures (the land-bound animals) it is square in shape, while in birds (that have wings and fly in the air) it is circular.

The fire element is subtly present here as an auspicious flame of fire that remains hidden from view but is nevertheless the most important element of the body (4).

[Note—The area of the midriff around the middle of the abdomen is said to be the abode of the fire element. Its apex is near the navel and the lower end is in the region of the groins.]

5. The middle of the human body is located at a spot that is two fingers above the anus and two fingers below the genital (i.e. in the exact center of the groin).

For four-footed creature (animals) the middle of the body is located in the region of the heart, while in the birds it is the center of the abdomen itself that forms the middle of their body.

This middle part of the body is generally nine fingers high and four fingers wide. It is shaped more or less like an egg (i.e. it is oblong, with the broad end towards the navel and the tapered end pointing towards the lower end of the body) (5).

6. The navel is located at its center at the top. The navel is circular in shape and there is wheel with twelve spokes located in it.

The Jiva (the living being) is impelled or coaxed or driven by the force of this wheel to move around (in this world), and the numerous good and bad deeds and their attendant consequences that he has accumulated over his past act as the motivating factor¹. [This is called the 'Nabhi Chakra' and it is one of the subtle energy centers of the body. The Nabhi Chakra is said to be the center of energy that is akin to the Sun, and by inference it means that it is the one center that keeps the wheel of life turning in the body just like the celestial Sun keeps the wheel of life moving in this world by providing the latter with light, energy, heat and warmth. If the Sun decides not to shine, the life on earth would be wiped out in a jiffy. This is exactly what is meant here in a metaphoric manner. Since all the Naadis have their center in the area of the navel, and since it marks the area of the body in the abdomen where all the major organs of digestion, excretion, reproduction, etc. are located, it is the one point in the body that acts like the hearth in the household. If the fire in this heart is allowed to die, the house would freeze cold and its inhabitants would also die due to the freezing temperatures and lack of cooked food.]

Even as the spider moves around and remains trapped in the net made from a thread created by its own self, the creature remains trapped and keeps on roaming in this world because of a net that he has cast around himself and which is his own creation. It is web which completely traps him. [This net or web represents his numerous latent desires, his hidden passions and temperaments called his Vasanas and Vrittis respectively that act as inspirations for his many deeds and actions, which in turn produce their own chain of consequences, leading to a complex structure which is similar to a complex web created by the spider. Again, just like the spider is the one which can gobble up the net and free its self, the creature is the one who can actually bring about his own freedom by eliminating the web of this world by trouncing his Vasanas and Vrittis, and overcoming their delusory affects upon himself.]

The Jiva or the living being rides on the various Prans (vital winds) present in the body. In other words, the subtle and invisible entity that lives in the body and is recognized as the Jiva or the living being depends upon the vital winds that are present inside the body to become active and make its presence felt inside the gross body which would be otherwise completely inane, lifeless and dead. The gross body would show no signs of life if there was no Jiva or the living being residing inside it, and this Jiva in turn depends upon the vital winds to become active and show signs of life as reflected by the activities and movement of the gross body. The presence of the signs of life in the body—i.e. the recognition of the body as a 'Jiva' or living being—depends upon the presence of the vital winds inside it. [Life exists in the gross body and the latter is kept alive by the presence of the various vital winds inside it. The word 'Jiva' literally means one who is alive. Hence, the factor that makes the body alive and active, the element that

helps the 'self' or the Atma of the creature to show activity and agility is the wind element. If the wind element leaves the body, the latter would be dead and of no good. This fact has been emphasized in Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, section 1, verse no. 6-15; Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 1, Brahman 3; Canto 6, Brahman 1, verse nos. 8-14.] (6-7).

[Note—¹*Wheel*—References: (a) Atharva Veda = Prashna Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 11; Canto 6, verse no. 6; Mundak Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 2, section 2, verse no. 6; Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 2-7; Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 9, verse no. 3-4, 6; Tripdvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 7, paragraph 3-14 (which describes the 'Sudarshan Chakra' of Vishnu). (b) Krishna Yajur Veda = Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 4, 6; Canto 5, verse no. 12; Canto 6, verse nos. 1-3. (c) Shukla Yajur Veda = Paingalo-panishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 3-4.]

8. The region of the Kundalini lies below the navel and above the groins.

The Kundalini has eight coils, and together they represent eight sorts of characteristics or inherent nature exhibited by the Kundalini.

[The *Kundalini* is a coiled subtle energy centre of the body that lies at the base of the spine, called the Mooladhar Chakra—or the whirling energy center that forms the base of the body. The Kundalini blocks the lower end of the spinal cord by one of its ends. When it is aroused or activated during Yoga, it is heated, and its trapped energy is released into the Sushumna Naadi, the central duct passing through the spinal cord. This energy is also called the Kundalini and it passes through the various Chakras en-route to the top of the head. While doing so, all the Chakras are opened like a bud opening under pressure. When the energy of the Kundalini reaches the top the head, the practitioner experiences extreme sense of ecstasy, called the exhilaration of self-realisation when he feels extremely blissful and contented. Usually, the energy would revert back to its original position when the ascetic wakes up from his meditation session, but with sustained practice the Kundalini can be trained to remain perpetually whirling in the top of the head, i.e. in the Shasraar Chakra which is like a wheel having a thousand spokes. { 'Sahastra' = a thousand; Ara = spokes of the wheel; Chakra = wheel. } According to the Tantra philosophy it is like a lotus with a thousand petals. In Yogic parlance, when the Kundalini is stationed in this region of the head, the practitioner of Yoga is said to live in a state of Samadhi—i.e. a state of trance when he experiences bliss and contentedness, and is unaware of anything, including his own body. From practical angle this is because the nerves of the brain are subject to subtle vibrations which have the effect of massaging and titillating them. Refer verse no. 10 below.]

This Kundalini lies in a dormant state at the base of the spine (in the region of the body called the Mooladhar Chakra). During Yoga involving various meditation exercises, the vital winds called the Pran and the fire element present inside the body are systematically controlled and harnessed. This results in the food (nutrients) and water (the fluid components of the body in which the food is dissolved—e.g. the blood, mucous, various enzymes and hormones etc.) present in the body too being regulated properly. The vital winds spread uniformly inside the body, and the fire element is also equally distributed. In other words, the entire internal apparatus of the body is brought under control.

It is then that sufficient energy is generated and the vital wind called the Apan Vayu (which is present in the lower end of the body to help downward movement of the

food in the intestines, its digestion and its final excretion, as well as in the mouth to help imbibe food and water), which is heated by the regulated fire element, enters the Kundalini. This helps to establish a seamless link between the Apaana Vayu that is present in the mouth and the one that is present in the lower end of the body.

The Apaana Vayu rises up along with the Kundalini from the back of the body (because the energy of the Kundalini rises up through the Sushumna Naadi which is present in the spinal cord which itself lies along the backbone) to reach the mouth, and finally goes right up to the top of the head to reach the Brahm-Randhra.

[The *Brahm-Randhra* is a hair-like slit in the skull on the top of the head. At the height of Yoga, the energy of the Kundalini is thrust out of the body through this slit by the heated and pressurized Apaana Vayu. According to Yoga philosophy, this is how the ascetic leaves his body to find Mukti or liberation and deliverance from all fetters represented by the gross body and its organs. Refer verse no. 10 below.]

The glorious and divine radiance of the Kundalini is revealed in the form of a subtle and sublime entity that is radiant and splendid, and that majestically resides in the subtle space of the heart called the 'Hridaya Akash'.

[This entity is the Atma or the pure consciousness which is self-illuminated and shines in the subtle heart much like the celestial sun which shines in the sky. The allegory here serves to highlight the fact that the Kundalini has the same energy and importance as the sun, and just like a wise man can utilize the sun's light, heat and energy for his all round benefit, the energy and the potentials of the Kundalini too can be utilized by a wise aspirant for his spiritual welfare. Another purpose is to emphasize that the Atma is as splendid and radiant as the Kundalini and the sun, but like in the case of the Kundalini which needs to be activated to be of any good for the aspirant, the Atma too needs to be properly cultivated and realised to be of any spiritual good of the aspirant. Otherwise, both the Kundalini and the Atma would remain neglected and dormant in the body while the person continues to suffer from all sorts of spiritual ailments. It would be an ironical situation wherein gold lies hidden inside the house while a man suffers from financial problems.] (8).

9. There are fourteen main Naadis (tubular ducts through which the vital life-forces flow inside the body) that surround the Kundalini.

These Naadis are the following—Ida, Pingla, Sushumna, Saraswati, Varuni, Pusha, Hastajivha, Yashaswani, Vishwodari, Kuhu, Shankhini, Payaswani, Alambusa, and Ghandhari (9).

10. Wise ascetics assert that out of them the Sushumna Naadi is the main one, and it is capable of bearing the world (i.e. life) as well as is the path by which the ascetic attains Moksha (liberation and deliverance). [See the note of stanza no. 1 of verse no. 8 above.]

This Naadi lies at the rear of the anus and goes up the spinal cord to reach the top of the head where the Brahm-Randhra is situated. [See the note of stanza no. 2 of verse no. 8 above.]

It is clearly visible, very fine, and honoured as a pathway to Brahm who is worshipped as Lord Vishnu by his followers. [In other words, the Mantras used for doing Yoga (meditation and contemplation)—which would help in concentrating the mind and energy of the body for the purpose of activation of the Kundalini, which in turn would

help the practitioner in realizing the bliss of experiencing Brahm or cosmic Consciousness—would be the Mantras of Lord Vishnu.] (10).

11. The Ida Naadi is situated to the left and the Pingla Naadi to the right of the main Naadi called the Sushumna Naadi. [The Ida and the Pingla are intertwined around the Sushumna.]

The energy of the Moon flows through the Ida Naadi, while that of the Sun flows through the Pingla Naadi.

[Now, the two opposing characteristics represented by the Moon and the Sun are being enumerated—] The Moon has a predominance of Tama Guna, while the Sun is dominated by the Raja Guna. [The Tama Guna is a metaphor for darkness and inertia, and that is why the disc of the Moon has no light of its own, and except for the full-moon night its disc is always darkened to some extent. Besides this, the Moon always shines in the night which is the period when the creature wishes to rest and shed all activities. On the other hand, the Raja Guna is associated with light and a desire to rise and be productive. This is why the Sun is self-illuminated and energetic, and its rise is associated with activity and productivity.]

The Moon is associated with Amrit or the ambrosia of life and bliss, while the Sun is linked to the scorching poison. [The soothing rays of the moonlight have a cooling effect on the scorched earth that was heated by the Sun during the day, and these rays are able to provide comfort and solace to the tormented creature. On the other hand, the sun's rays are ferocious and cruel by nature, and they can scorch and burn if not guarded against. The white colour of the Moon's disc is said to be due the colour of the Amrit or elixir of life and bliss stored in it by the Gods, while the Sun is said to the celestial cauldron of fire.]

These two join hands to bear the whole time between them. [That is, the full day is divided between the Moon and the Sun, and there is no phase of time beyond them or which does not fall within their jurisdiction.]

Since the Moon and the Sun symbolically move along the Ida and the Pingla Naadis as cited above, it follows that the Sushumna Naadi is the one that actually bears or holds and enjoys everything governed by time. [In other words, it is around the Sushumna Naadi that the life of a creature revolves. It is this Naadi that sustains life and consciousness in the body of the creature, where the body itself is a world in miniature form and the creature is the Atma or the pure conscious soul that lives in this world. In simple terms this is brought about by the fact that the Sushumna Naadi is the central nerve of the spinal cord, and it is through this Naadi that all the impulses of the body move from one point to another. The nerves take all the impulses to the brain, and the latter's instructions to all the organs of the body. Should the Sushumna Naadi fail, the entire circuit would be disrupted and the 'world' (here represented by the 'body') would be 'dead' as far as the 'Jiva' (here the living being represented by his Atma) is concerned. It is like the case of the main overhead high-tension electric wire snapping and plunging the entire city in darkness.]

Behind the Sushumna Naadi is located the Saraswati Naadi, and to the side of it is the Kuhu Naadi.

The Vaaruni Naadi is situated between the Kuhu and the Yashaswani Naadis.

The Payaswani Naadi is situated between the Pusha and Saraswati Naadis.

The Yashaswani Naadi is situated between the Gaandhaari and the Saraswati Naadis.

The Alambusa Naadi is located in the center of the Kanda. [The 'Kanda' literally means a root or tuber, and it is shaped like a short carrot or turnip. Its pointed end faces downwards towards the male genitalia and its upper rounded end is near the navel. The Alumbusa Naadi runs along its center.]

The Kuhu Naadi is spread below the Sushumna Naadi till the area of the genitals.

The Vaaruni Naadi is spread in all the directions below and above the Kundalini.

The Yashaswani and the Saumya Naadis go up to the big toes of the two legs.

The Pingla Naadi goes upwards and reaches the right nostrils.

The Pusha Naadi rises behind the Pingla and goes up to the right eyes.

The Yashaswani Naadi goes up to the right ears.

The Saraswati Naadi goes up to the upper surface of the tongue.

The Shankhani Naadi moves up from below and reaches the left ear.

The Gaandhaari Naadi moves up behind the Ida Naadi and goes up to the left eye.

[The Ida Naadi itself goes up to the left nostrils.]

The Alambusa Naadi radiates above and below the base of the anus.

Other minor Naadis are located inside or around these primary fourteen Naadis. There are finer Naadis inside them as well.

Just like the leaf of the banyan tree is covered by a network of veins and capillaries, the Naadis too cover each area of the creature's body¹ (11).

[Note—¹Refer verse no. 13 below which says that there are in all seventy-two thousand Naadis through which the vital wind called the Samaan Vayu distributes nutrients extracted from the food eaten and digested inside the body to all its corners. Hence we conclude that the Naadis listed in verse no. 9 are only the chief ones, whereas the total numbers of Naadis are seventy-two thousand.]

12. The ten Prans or vital winds symbolizing life-forces of the body that constantly move in the Naadis are the following—Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana, Vyaana, Naaga, Kurma, Krikara, Devdutta, and Dhananjaya (12).

13. The Pran (i.e. the chief vital wind) moves or is located chiefly in the mouth, the nose, the throat, the navel, the big toes of the feet, and below and above the Kundalini.

The Vyaana moves or is located chiefly in the ears, the eyes, the waist region, the thighs, the nostrils, the throat, and the hip region.

The Apaana moves or is located chiefly in the anus, the genitals, the thighs, the stomach, the testicles, the hip area, the navel, and the midriff where the fire is present (refer verse no. 4 above).

The Udaana is present and moves about in all the joints of the body.

The Samaana is present and moves about in the hands and legs (limbs) and all other appendages of the body. It also helps in equal distribution of the nutrients of the food that has been digested inside the body by the help of the fire element to all parts of the body through the network of seventy-two thousand Naadis. Hence, the Samaana wind also moves in all the seventy-two thousand Naadis and works in close association with the fire element. [There are fourteen chief Naadis listed in verse no. 9, while the closing stanza of verse no. 10 asserts that there are numerous other Naadis that form a network of Naadis exactly like the veins and capillaries seen in the leaf of a banyan tree.]

The other vital winds such as Naag etc. are subsidiary in nature and they live and move about in the skin, bones etc.

The vital winds that live in the stomach and middle part of the abdomen (i.e. the Apan and the Saman) help to separate the water (fluids, enzymes, digestive juices etc.) present in the stomach from the nutrients of the food eaten (after the food is digested), and then take the nutrients through the Naadis to all the parts of the body (while the fluid portion and the grosser aspect of the food left after digestion and extraction of nutrients are taken to the organs of excretion, i.e. to the kidneys and the rectum respectively).

The Apan Vayu keeps the internal fire responsible for cooking and digesting of food eaten burning. The food eaten is literally placed on the top of the water, and the water is placed on the fire which is stoked from below so as to heat this water which in turn cooks or digests the food eaten. [This is a simple kitchen of the body. The fire of the hearth represented by the abdomen is the triangular fire area mentioned in verse no. 4. The air needed to keep the fire burning and the grate of the oven ventilated is the Apan wind. The stomach is the pot. The fluids present in it are the water. And the chewed or pulverized food that is put in the stomach is the raw material from which the nutrients are needed to be extracted. Once this is done, the Saman wind would take these nutrients to the different parts of the body, while the waste matter is taken to the kidneys and the anus for excretion.]

The fire element present in the body is protected by the Apan wind as the latter helps to keep it lighted and prevents it from being extinguished. [As in the instance of the cooking of the food cited above, the Apan wind, which is predominantly present in the lower part of the abdomen, keeps the fire alive by fanning it from the below.]

This fire when stoked by the Pran Vayu (the vital winds) gathers heat and brings to a boil the water element present in the middle part of the body (i.e. the stomach) so that the vegetables and cereals that enter the stomach are properly cooked by it—i.e. the food is properly digested and its nutrients separated from the grosser aspects of the food such as the sweat, the urine, the blood, the semen, the various juices and other fluids present in the body (viz. the bile, the pancreatic juices, the various digestive enzymes, the mucous, the hormones etc.).

Once the process of digestion and separation of the subtle aspect of the food (i.e. its life-sustaining nutrients) from the grosser aspects (e.g. the sweat, urine, blood etc.) is complete, the Saman wind takes over. In association with the Pran wind (i.e. the breath), it takes the vital nutrients thus segregated to all the corners of the body via the medium of the Naadis. The Pran wind meanwhile moves in and out of the body in the form of the breath. [It will be noticed here that the Pran wind, or the breath, acts like a pump that works from the surface and provides the other winds the necessary suction power to move against the forces of gravity and lift the nutrients as well as certain of the grosser parts of the food that are important for the body, such as the blood, the mucous, the bile and other juices, the hormones etc. to the upper parts of the body against the usual downward pull of gravity. This upward pull exerted by the Pran wind also helps the Apan wind, whose natural inclination is to move downwards and out of the body, to remain inside the body and even move upwards to keep the fire element lighted, besides being able to activate the Kundalini during the process of Yoga.]

The vital winds eliminate the wastes present inside the body, such as the stool, urine, sweat etc., through the nine openings of the body into the space outside it. [The

nine openings of the body are called its Doors, and they are the following—two nostrils, two ears, the hair follicles, the pores of the body, one mouth, one anus and one urinary organ which doubles up as the reproductive organ as well.]

[Now, the functions of the vital winds are being enumerated—] The Pran wind is responsible for breath and expelling mucous in the form of cough.

The Apaana wind is responsible for expelling stool and urine from the body.

The Vyaana wind is responsible for accepting or giving away anything.

The Udaana wind is responsible for lifting the body.

The Samaana wind is responsible for nourishing the body (as it takes the nutrients to all the parts of the body).

The Naaga wind is responsible for belching and excreting of contaminated or polluted wind through the throat and mouth.

The Kurma wind is responsible for closing and opening of the eyelids.

The Krikan wind is responsible for hunger and appetite.

The Devdutta wind is responsible for creating laziness, lethargy and inertia.

The Dhananjaya wind is responsible for creating cough and other types of mucous that help to expel infection from the body (in association with the Apaana, the Naaga and the Pran winds (13).

14. In this way, a wise and erudite practitioner should first become well acquainted with the Naadi complex and the Pran complex before attempting to cleanse, purify or de-clog the Naadis (14).

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Canto 1/Section 5

[This section outlines the rules to be followed by a spiritual aspirant who wishes to clean the Naadis and undertake to do Yoga. The process of Pranayama is outlined as well.]

1. A person who wishes to practice the teachings of this Upanishad (that pertain to the cleansing and detoxification of the Naadis and the activation of the Kundalini so as to help him realise Brahma) should first make himself eligible for it by observing the tenets of Yama and Niyama (as outlined in sections 1 and 2 respectively of this Canto 1). He should discard all company and step on the path of truthfulness (i.e. take the exclusive recourse of truth in the pursuit of one's objective in life, even if it entails the greatest of hardships and problems).

The spiritual aspirant should learn to exercise control over anger, remain ever diligent in serving the Guru (moral preceptor, spiritual guide and teacher), remain obedient to and under the guidance of one's parents, and learn the practical aspects of spiritual life, how to observe the various religious sacraments, keep the different vows, do the various fire sacrifices etc. by staying near someone who is very careful himself in observing the laws of conduct sanctioned by the scriptures for the Ashrama (phase of life) to which he belongs (i.e. a person who is conscientious and upright in his behaviour and thoughts, and who diligently follows the laws of Dharma and strictly adhered to religious conduct).

Then he should go to a 'Tapovan'—i.e. a forested or any green area that is serene and pleasant as well as conducive to doing Tapa (austerity, penance and other spiritual practices). This area should be rich in fruits, edible roots and water—as these are needed to sustain one's self in the absence of facilities that were available in the household, as also to prevent the hassle of worrying for basic needs of food and water.

The aspirant should select an auspicious place here in the Tapovan which is open and wide enough so that it can resonate with the loud chanting of hymns dedicated to Brahm, the Supreme Being, and where other people of the same temperament and spiritual bent of mind live. The place should be well-endowed with fruits, edible roots and stems, flowers and water etc. It should be near a shrine or a river bank.

Should he be inclined to establish a permanent place for himself and also to help other like-minded people who cannot endure the hardships of a forest life but wish to lead a life of frugality and austerity nevertheless, he must select a place that can foster a spiritual environment and erect a monastery there. It could be in a quiet area of a village or a town.

The place selected should be of even dimensions—i.e. it should neither be very high nor too low (i.e. it should be on even ground), and also neither should it be too long nor too wide (i.e. it should be, as far as possible, a square piece of land).

The place of his residence should have a small door. It should be plastered with cow's dung mixed with the cow's urine, and should be completely safe.

The aspirant should live in such a pleasant and comfortable place and start studying the Vedas and other scriptures along with practicing Yoga on a regular and sustained basis (1).

2. He should first worship and pay his obeisance to Lord Ganesh, and then to his chosen deity (Godhead) by bowing before him and offering his oblations to him.

Then he must sit in one of the Aasans described earlier (in Canto 1, section 3). He should sit on a soft seat, face towards the east or the north, and strive to master the art of doing the various Aasans successfully.

Then he should sit erect with the neck and the head in a straight line, and focus his sight on the tip of his nostrils. He must strive to visualize the presence of the Chandra Mandal in the region of the forehead that lies between the two eyebrows (i.e. he should mentally perceive the subtle presence of the Moon with its glorious moonlight in this area of the head, which is called the Agya Chakra).

Simultaneously, he should enjoy the vision of the essence of Amrit (ambrosia) through his eyes. [When he is engrossed in concentration as described in the aforesaid stanzas, tear-drops emerge in his eyes, and these are likened to the drops of nectar that gives bliss and happiness.]

[Now the three phases of Pranayam, or breath control exercise, are being described—] The practitioner should then inhale air through the Ida Naadi (left nostril) gradually over the duration of twelve Matras.

[The word 'Matra' means a measurement of time, a fraction or part or quantity of the whole. That is, the time taken for inhalation is the approximate time that one would take to repeat the Beej Mantra of the chosen deity twelve times. For instance, if one is worshipping Lord Ram, then the time taken to inhale air should be the time taken to silently repeat the Beej Mantra 'Raam/Raan(g)' for Lord Ram. Ordinarily, one Matra is

equivalent to one second. Hence, the total time taken for inhalation is twelve seconds. The process of inhalation is known as ‘Purak’—meaning to supply and overcome deficit. Here the body is being supplied with a fresh stream of oxygen-rich air.]

The inhaled wind is retained in the stomach (i.e. inside the body) and the practitioner should visualize its mixing with the fire element present inside the body. This fire element has flames leaping from it, and is complete with the Reff and the Bindu.

[This esoteric reference to the ‘Reff’ and the ‘Bindu’ pertains to the sound of OM which is the cosmic vibration that resonates in the body when it is full of air. The OM is the cosmic vibration that exists in the ether in the outer space of the sky, but when the body is filled with wind it resembles this sky filled with ether, and therefore the reverberations of the cosmic sound are replicated inside the body as well. The best evidence of the presence of this cosmic sound in the body is when one closes one’s ears with the fingers. A sort of distant roar is heard which resembles the roar heard near a raging fire. This roar is created by the clash of the fire element and the wind element. It is akin to the cosmic vibrations in ether and hence compared to OM. It is this sound which is heard during the second phase of Pranayam when the inhaled wind that is now trapped inside the body clashes with the internal fire element. The ‘reff’ or ‘reph’ referred to here is a burring, a whirring and a guttural sound represented by the sound of the letter ‘R’ which is the Beej Mantra or the basic Mantra of the fire element in its primary form. The word ‘Bindu’ is indicative of the point source, the ‘dot’ from which the spark of life emerged in creation. Hence it refers to the pure cosmic Consciousness that lives subtly in the body of the creature as his Atma. This second phase of Pranayam is known as Kumbhak—or filling the pot. The ‘pot’ here is the abdomen, and the ‘filling’ is done with the wind.]

Finally, the withheld wind is exhaled through the Pingla Naadi or the right nostrils.

[This is the third phase of Pranayam, and is known as Rechak or purging wherein the polluted air from within the body is purged by exhalation. It is ‘purging’ because this wind takes all the pollutions that it can gather from the inside of the body as it moves out just like the chimney of a factory removes toxic fumes from the premises.]

The process is reversed now—with the Purak (inhalation) being done through the Pingla, followed by the Kumbhak (holding the wind inside the body), and the Rechak (exhalation) being done through the Ida. [Refer also to verse no. 1, section 7 of this Canto 1.] (2).

3-4. This exercise of Pranayam should be continuously practiced for a period of forty-three days, or for three, four or seven months, or for one full year.

It should be done thrice daily during observation of the sacrament of ‘Sandhya’—i.e. at dawn, at noon, and at dusk. During each cycle, Pranayam should be done three, four or six times. [In other words, Pranayam is done thrice daily, and each time it is done three times, or four times, or six times.]

This practice helps to clean and purify the Naadis. [That is, Pranayam helps to declog the congested Naadis in the body and helps in easy flow of Pran forces in them. This results in re-energizing the worn-out tissues of the body, and re-activates its dormant vigour and vitality. In other words, the body is rejuvenated.]

The benefits are immense—the body feels light, the face becomes radiant and glows, and the internal fire element is revived (and this shows in the form of renewed vigour, vitality, strength and energy as well as restored appetite). From the spiritual perspective, the practitioner is able to hear the Naad (as described in verse no. 2 above in the context of Kumbhak) (3-4).

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Canto 1/Section 6

[This section continues with the topic of Pranayam and Naadi cleaning initiated in previous section no. 5.]

1-2. Pranayam is to bring together the Pran and the Apan winds. It has three phases called the Rechak (exhalation), Purak (inhalation) and Kumbhak (holding the breath inside the body). Since the ethereal word OM too has three syllables (A, U and M) and it is the supreme Mantra that is universally used for doing mediation and contemplation, Pranayam is deemed to be equivalent to OM. [The Mantra used for Pranayam is OM.] (1-2).

3-4. The practitioner should sit in the Padmasan or any other Aasan (described in Canto 1, section 3) convenient to him and meditate, or focus the attention of his mind, as follows—There is divine goddess known as Gayatri who has a divine presence at the tip of the nose. She is surrounded by a halo of silvery white radiance that resembles the brilliance of moonlight. Her countenance is reddish in hue. She is sitting on a divine Swan. She holds a Danda (a scepter or small baton indicating her authority and power) in her hand. She is of a young age, and is an image that represents the first letter ‘A’ of the divine and ethereal Mantra OM. [The goddess referred here represents Brahma the creator. She is the female manifestation of Brahma and represents his Shakti or divine cosmic powers to create. The letter ‘A’ of the word OM also symbolizes the initial phases of creation. The colour red or copper-colour represents the Raja Guna, the second of the three primary qualities in this world, and it creates a tendency for creation and production. That is why the colour of the blood is red.]

The second letter ‘U’ of this Mantra OM is manifested in the form of the goddess known as Savitri; she represents the second phase of OM. She has an auspicious body that has a white or fair countenance. She is also of a young age and sits atop the legendary bird known as Garud. [Garud is the heron or eagle who is regarded as the vehicle or mount of Lord Vishnu.] She holds a Chakra in her hand. [The Chakra is a serrated discus held by Vishnu and is his weapon. Hence, this goddess is deemed to be a female manifestation of Vishnu; she represents the dynamic powers of the Supreme Being to sustain and protect what has been created. The colour white represents the Sata Guna, the best of the three primary qualities in this world, and it creates a tendency for sustenance, development and protection.]

Finally, the last letter of the Mantra OM, which is ‘M’, has assumed an image of a goddess known as Saraswati; she represents the final phase of OM. She has a dark countenance, rides a bull, is aged, and holds a trident in her hand. [Obviously, she

represents Lord Shiva, the God who is assigned the task of bringing the creation to a conclusion. This is clearly evident in the fact of her holding a trident. The colour dark or black represents the Tama Guna, the lowest of the three primary qualities in this world which creates destruction and ruin.] [3.]

So we see that the three letters A, U and M constitute the divine and ethereal Mantra OM, and their symbolic representations in the form of the three goddesses encompass the entire creation because they represent the three phases of creation—origin, development and conclusion respectively.

Though the word OM has been hypothetically divided into three letters but when said or pronounced it is deemed to be a monosyllable and pronounced as one single uninterrupted primordial sound ‘OM’. Hence, OM is known as the ‘Ekaskshar’—literally meaning ‘one letter’. [It is like the rumble of the cloud’s thunder—it is an unbroken sound that arises in the vast bowls of the sky, spread out, and gradually subsides to finally vanish into the bowls of the sky. No one can describe this sound except in general terms, and no one can segregate it into compartments.]

In a similar manner, the single source of this entire creation is also an entity that is one non-dual and universal, but which is visualized as having various phases or dimensions. This cosmic and universal divinity which is represented by the Mantra OM is also known as the ‘Ekaskshar’—literally meaning here ‘one that is imperishable; an entity that is one, non-dual, immutable, indivisible, eternal, infinite and imperishable’. It is in the form of a supreme source of ‘light’ that is self-illuminated and universally present. [4.] (3-4).

5. [Now, the process of Pranayam is being described.] Once one is able to successfully focus one’s mind and contemplate in the manner outlined above (in verse nos. 3-4), he should inhale air through the Ida Naadi (the left nostrils) in a time that is equivalent to sixteen Matras (i.e. sixteen seconds)*. During this time, he should focus his attention on the first letter ‘A’ of the word OM.

The Khumbhak (holding of the air inside the body) should be done for duration of sixty-four Matras (i.e. sixty-four seconds)*. During this time, one must focus one’s attention on the second letter ‘U’ of the word OM.

Finally, the air should be exhaled through the Pingla Naadi (right nostrils) in a time that is equivalent to thirty-two Matras (i.e. thirty-two seconds)*. During this time, one must focus one’s attention on the third letter ‘M’ of the word OM. The letter ‘M’ is to be visualized in the form of an image. [This applies to all the three phases, and the images that are to be visualized are described in verse nos. 3-4.]

This cycle must be repeated again and again. [Earlier, verse no. 2 of section 5 of this Canto 1 has said that the inhalation and exhalation must be alternated between the right and the left nostrils, and verse nos. 3-4 have described the frequency of doing Pranayam—i.e. it should be done for 43 days, or for 3, 4 or 5 months, or for one full year. It should also be done thrice a day—dawn, noon and dusk, and each time the cycle is to be repeated 3, 4 or 6 times.] (5).

[Note—* Compare with verse no. 3-4, section 5, and verse no. 2, section 7 of this Canto no.1. It should be understood that the varying figures as to the number of Matras, or the duration for which the various phases of Pranayam ought to be done, is to indicate that there is no rigid rule which is inviolable and which must be strictly adhered to, but one should adjust his timing as per his convenience and aptitude for Yoga. This fact has been

expressly endorsed in verse no. 7 of section 7 of this Canto 1. As a general rule, the timing for the Purak, the Kumbhak and the Rechak phases follow the following ratio—1:1:1; or 1:2:1; or 1:4:2; or 1:2:3.]

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Canto 1/Section 7

[This section describes Pranayam and its benefits in substantial detail.]

1. When the practitioner has sufficiently mastered the art of doing various Aasans and breath control exercises (as outlined in the above sections), he should simultaneously endeavour to dry up or burn the various impurities and grossness that clog his Sushuma Naadi. [This clogging of the Sushumna Naadi hampers the free flow of the vital life-sustaining factors such as the various vital winds called the Prans from freely flowing inside it, besides blocking the rise of the Kundalini energy from the lower end of the body to the head. In other words, when this chief Naadi is blocked due to any cause, the body suffers from free flow of vital life-forces inside it.]

This is brought about by diligently doing regular Yoga (meditation and contemplation) accompanied by constant practice of exercising self-restraint over the sense organs of the body, by being of a broad and compassionate heart as well as having a kind temperament and a graceful disposition that seeks well of all the creatures, and by eating in moderation (i.e. by exercising control over one's taste buds, observing fast and other restraints to help the body get rid of its accumulated toxins).

One must sit in the 'Baddha Padmasan'¹ and inhale air through the Chandra Naadi (i.e. the Ida Naadi; the left nostril). This air should be held inside the body during the phase of Khumbhak according to one's abilities, and then exhaled through the Surya or Sun Naadi (i.e. the Pingla Naadi; the right nostril).

Then the Purak (inhalation) should be done through the Surya Naadi, followed by the Kumbhak phase, and finally the Rechak (exhalation) should be done through the Chandra Naadi. In this way, the Purak and Rechak should be alternated between the Chandra and the Surya Naadis, and the Kumbhak phase lies in between them. [Refer verse no. 2, section 5 of this Canto 1.]

There is the following verse in this regard—'First the Purak should be done through the Ida Naadi and Kumbhak accomplished. It should followed by the Rechak through the Pingla Naadi. Then the process should be reversed by doing Purak through the Pingla Naadi and Kumbhak accomplished. It should followed by the Rechak through the Ida Naadi.

By diligently and constantly practicing Pranayam daily in the above manner, all the Naadis of the ascetic are thoroughly scrubbed clean and purified or detoxified in a wholesome manner in a period of three months (1).

2. Kumbhak should be practiced four times during the course of a day—in the morning (dawn), at noon, in the evening (dusk) and at midnight. The time taken for Kumbhak should be around eighty Matras (roughly eighty seconds)¹ (2).

[Note—¹Compare with verse no. 3-4, section 5, and verse no. 5, section 6 of this Canto no.1. It should be understood that the varying figures as to the number of Matras, or the duration for which the various phases of Pranayam ought to be done, is to indicate that there is no rigid rule which is inviolable and which must be strictly adhered to, but one should adjust his timing as per his convenience and aptitude for Yoga. This fact has been expressly endorsed in verse no. 7 of section 7 of this Canto 1. As a general rule, the timing for the Purak, the Kumbhak and the Rechak phases follow the following ratio—1:1:1; or 1:2:1; or 1:4:2; or 1:2:3.]

3. In the lower form or initial or primary stage of Pranayam, sweat breaks out on the body of the practitioner. In the middle or second stage of Pranayam, the body begins to shake or shiver. And in the higher or evolved stage of Pranayam, the body of the practitioner lifts from the ground (i.e. it begins to levitate) (3).

4. When the sweat breaks out on the body as a result of the strenuous efforts of Pranayam, the practitioner should rub it on the body itself (instead of wiping it off with a cloth) as this has beneficial effects for it makes the body of the ascetic strong and robust besides making it light (4).

5. In the earlier stages of practicing Pranayam, milk and clarified butter are prescribed as the best food for practitioners of Yoga. Later on when one becomes steady in one's practice, no rigid rules are needed for food. [This is because by that time the practitioner would have experienced the benefits of milk and its products, and develop a special liking for them, so much so that he would not want anything else even if given a choice. He would not need to coax his mind and body anymore to accept milk or its products; rather they would willingly accept them.] (5).

6. Even as a lion, an elephant or a tiger can be gradually tamed over a period of time by perseverance and patience, the vital winds too can be reined in by the practitioner of Pranayam in a gradual manner, and by persistence and constant practice.

On the other hand, if a man is impatient and wishes for a quick result, the winds would do more harm than good to him; they would ruin him; they would make him diseased (6).

7. Hence, one should feel at liberty to do Rechak according to one's natural convenience and inclination. Similarly, Kumbhak and Purak should also be according to one's comfort and aptitude. By practicing Pranayam in a manner that suits one is the best way to do it, and it also produces better results in a comparatively lesser time (7).

8. By doing Kumbhak according to one's abilities, the fire element inside the body is strengthened, the cosmic Naad (which is the ethereal sound that reverberates in the cosmos) is heard due to the de-clogging and cleansing of the different Naadis, and the body is made disease-free (refer verse no. 13/6).

[The composite process of Pranayam helps to scrub the Naadis clean. These Naadis are like the ventilation ducts of the body. When they are scrubbed clean, the flow of Pran or vital winds is aided. This stokes the fire element present in the body and strengthens it. This fire was weakened and hitherto suppressed due to overburdening of

the body by rubbish and toxins. The raging of the fire whips up currents of air, and anyone standing near such a fire can hear a roar or whirring sound. This is heard by the practitioner of Yoga, and it is visualized as the cosmic sound that is produced in the ether by the wind that blows in the deep recesses of the sky. It is conceptualized as OM. In the higher stages of Yoga, it is this whirring sound that is heard by the ascetic, and it is created by the rekindling of the dormant fire element that is already present inside his body.] (8).

9. By doing Pranayam in a systematic and regular manner, all the different Naadis present in the body of the ascetic become cleaned and purified (i.e. they are scrubbed and detoxified).

The vital wind then is able to easily open the mouth of the Sushumna Naadi and enter it (9).

10. When the vital winds become steady in the body (i.e. when the practitioner is able to control them through the three phases of Pranayam), the Mana (mind) too becomes steady and gets rid of its inherent restlessness.

When the Mana is steady it is called the state of 'Manomani'—literally the state of mind when it is not subject to fluctuation, when it is not in a flux, and when it is as controlled as the wind. [Both the mind and the wind have a natural tendency to be restless. They are like two sides of the same coin. So when one is controlled, its counterpart is also reined in.] (10).

11. [Now, the different Bandhas are being described. These Bandhas are the closing of the various apertures of the body by which the wind can escape during Pranayam. Some of the Upanishads that describe the various Bandhas are the following—Yoga Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 41-52; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 44-45, 68; Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 73-78 ½; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 112-121; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 101-111, Canto 5, verse nos. 37-39.]

The practitioner should do Jalandhar Bandha¹ at the end of the Purak (inhalation). [That is, this Bandha should be done during the time of Kumbhak so that the trapped wind does not escape outside.]

The Uddiyan Bandha² should be done at the end of Kumbhak and the beginning of Rechak (exhalation) (11).

[Note—¹The *Jalandhar Bandha* has been described in the Yoga Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 51 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which says that it is the constricting of the muscles of the throat that is done at the end of Purak (inhalation of breath or air) so that the inhaled air is prevented from escaping. Refer also to Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 109-111.

²The *Uddiyan Bandha* has been described in the Yoga Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 47-50 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. To quote—"To do Uddiyan Bandha, one should sit steadily in the Vajra Aasan posture and put the hands on the bent legs. The heels are pressed against the genitals from below and this helps to exercise great pressure on the Kanda area—i.e. the Mool Kanda, or the area around the groins. While doing this, the muscles of the abdomen are forcefully pulled inwards and upwards along with similar attempt to constrict the muscles of both the throat and chest. In brief, attempt is made to constrict the entire muscular system of the lower part of the body and the chest area so

that great pressure is exerted on the wind that has entered the Sushumna Naadi, thereby facilitating its upward movement in this Naadi.

By practicing this exercise, the Pran (vital winds) are able to get absorbed in the tissues of the abdomen in a gradual manner. This helps to eliminate all diseases of the stomach and abdomen. This is because this exercise tones up the muscles and invigorates them, providing them with new energy and strength to function with renewed vigour. When the tissues are well ventilated and energized, when their toxic wastes are removed by the scrubbing affect of the Pran rubbing against them, they would too regain their lost strength and energy to function in a prime shape. That is why this exercise should be practiced regularly and persistently.” Refer also to Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 106-107.]

12. In order to restrain the wind from moving out of the body, the aperture at the lower end of the body (the anus) is constricted along with the simultaneous constriction of the throat. When the abdominal muscles are pulled in from the anterior side of the abdominal cavity towards the spine, the Pran Vayu (the vital winds) can enter the Brahm Naadi (the Sushumna Naadi) and flow in it.

[The Sushumna Naadi is called the ‘Brahm Naadi because it leads up to the top of the head where the Brahm-Randhra is situated, and where the practitioner can experience the ecstatic feeling of Brahm-realisation.] (12).

13. When a skilled ascetic is able to lift the Apaan wind (which is naturally located in the lower end of the body, especially the intestines) from the lower end of the body along with the simultaneous lowering of the Pran wind (i.e. the breath which is naturally located in the upper region of the body, especially the chest), the two mix and create a situation that helps to harmonize the various functions of the body and its tissues. The evident benefit for the aspirant ascetic is that he is able to overcome the crippling effects of old age and remain in a perpetual young age of roughly sixteen years. [His body is rejuvenated, his internal organs are revitalized, and his latent energy, vitality and vigour represented by the fire element that had become cold due to the debilitating effects of aging is re-kinkled—refer verse no. 8. The combined affect on the body is that all its internal organs regain their toned condition like that of a young man of roughly sixteen years.] (13).

13/1. The practicing ascetic should sit in the Sukhasan (i.e. a sitting posture that is convenient to him) and draw in air (i.e. do Purak) through the right Naadi (i.e. the right nostril) and fill every pore of the body from the tip of the hair on his head to the tip of the toe nails (i.e. he should do comprehensive Kumbhak). After that, the air should be let out (i.e. he should do Rechak) through the left Naadi (i.e. through the left nostril).

This process helps in scrubbing and cleaning of the skull along with all the Naadis of the body (13/1).

13/2. Another way of doing Pranayam in practical terms is to inhale wind slowly through both the nostrils simultaneously while making a muttering and humming sound. [This is the first step of Pranayam called Purak. The sound referred to here has two meanings—one, it is the repetition of some Mantra, e.g. OM, and second, it might refer to the sound produced during the normal breathing process but is not paid attention to under normal

condition. The idea here is to focus one's mind on doing Pranayam inspite of remaining busy in the hustle and bustle of life. In fact, the Pranayam that is being prescribed here is meant for doing throughout the day, and it implies that the practitioner of this holistic way of doing Pranayam may be externally engaged in so many varied activities of life but internally he is at peace with himself because such concentration of mind is only possible when the mind and the inner-self are calm and undisturbed.]

Then Kumbhak should be done according to one's ability to hold the air inside the body conveniently. Finally, the air should be exhaled through the Ida Naadi (i.e. the left nostril).

This process can be done even while standing or walking. It helps to overcome excessive cough and ignite the fire of the stomach (i.e. increase the dormant appetite) (13/2).

13/3. The third method of doing Pranayam is to accept or inhale air (i.e. do Purak) through the mouth (instead of the nose) while making a hissing sound. Then Kumbhak is done according to one's convenience and ability. Finally, Rechak (exhalation) is done through both the nostrils simultaneously (instead of through one of the two nostrils).

This helps in overcoming excessive hunger and thirst, as well as laziness and drowsiness (13/3).

13/4. The fourth method of doing Pranayam is to accept or inhale air (i.e. do Purak) through the tongue. [The mouth is wide open and the tongue is protruded out. This sort of inhalation is done by a panting animal or a man after he has done some vigorous activity. The moist surface of the tongue directly absorbs oxygen from the air and it is a quicker method of ventilating the body and oxidizing the tissues.]

Then Kumbhak is done according to one's convenience and ability. Finally, Rechak (exhalation) is done through both the nostrils simultaneously (as done during the third type of Pranayam described in verse no. 13/3).

This helps in controlling and curing a number of diseases such as enlargement of glands and inflammation of skin, spleen diseases, fever, bile, disturbed hunger and appetite etc. (13/4).

13/5. Now, the two aspects of Kumbhak are being described. Kumbhak is of two types— (i) Sahit (inclusive; in association with another entity), and (ii) Keval (exclusive; standing alone).

The 'Sahit Kumbhak' is one that is linked with the other two phases of Pranayam, viz. Purak (inhalation) and Rechak (exhalation). In other words, the Sahit Kumbhak is one that is flanked by Purak and Rechak; it is in between these two phases of Pranayam. It does not persist for any length of time as it has to give way to Rechak. And it also depends upon the Purak for drawing in air for the purpose of filling the body.

On the other hand, the 'Keval Kumbhak' is a stand-alone process that is independent of the other two steps of Pranayam. [That is, the wind is allowed to remain inside the body and circulate in it for protracted periods and for as long a duration as the ascetic wants it to remain inside the body. He does not feel the need to exhale or inhale. The Kumbhak of this sort may extend for many hours or even days together when the body is in a state of suspended animation. Since breathing is stopped, an ascetic who is

skilled in Keval Kumbhak might be buried in the ground for long periods but he would not die, for when he comes out of the ground he would be able to revive his sense organs and resume all the external activities of the body by resuming breathing.]

Till the time one becomes an expert in doing Keval Kumbhak he must regularly and diligently practice the Sahit form of Kumbhak. Once the ascetic is able to master the art of Keval Kumbhak, there is nothing that is not accessible to him in all the three worlds (i.e. in the terrestrial world, in the heavens and in the nether world), or there is no mystical power that is not within his reach.

The Kumbhak is so powerful and effective that it is alone capable of activating the Kundalini¹ (13/5).

[Note—¹The Kundalini is the coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine. Under ordinary situation it blocks the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi, thus preventing the vital winds called Pran from freely rising up this Naadi and reaching the upper reaches of the head where the ascetic is able to experience the bliss of Brahm-realisation. In more practical terms, since this Naadi is the main nerve passing through the spinal cord, its blocking impedes the free circulation of vital impulses from the various organs of the body to the brain and back to those organs. Naturally, this hinders the proper functioning of the body and creates a sort of log-jam. It is just like the case of the main ventilation duct of a house being clogged by soot or other impurities which has a negative effect on the freshness of the air inside the entire house.

The Kumbhak phase, when done systematically and for a prolonged period of time, helps to heat the wind trapped inside the body and build up pressure. The result is that the Kundalini is jerked and vibrated sufficiently enough to prod it into life. It straightens and opens the mouth of the Sushumna Naadi so as to allow the subtle energy of the Kundalini to enter it along with the heated Apan and other winds which push it from below. This energy and winds then travel upwards towards the head, and on the way they rupture or open other Chakras or energy centers of the body. The cumulative affect is that all the hitherto closed energy centers of the body are opened and a huge burst of subtle energy that was dormant and latent is now released. The result is obvious to imagine—the practitioner experiences renewed vigour and vitality surging through his veins and nerves.]

13/6. Once this process is mastered and the ascetic becomes skilled in doing Keval Kumbhak, his body becomes lean and muscular (i.e. he loses excess flab and becomes vigorous, full of vitality, agility and sprightliness). His face and general countenance becomes cheerful and pleasant. His eyes become clear (i.e. his vision improves, both physically and metaphorically). He can hear the Naad (i.e. he can hear the cosmic primordial sound roaring in his hears—refer verse no. 8). He becomes free from all the diseases. He is able to exercise full control over the 'Bindu' (literally meaning a 'drop' and but implying control over one's sexual impulses, i.e. he is able to practice continence and sexual abstinence by being able to control the flow of his sperms). The fire burning in his stomach becomes robust and re-activated (i.e. he regains his lost appetite and is able to digest food properly) (13/6).

14. The 'Vaishnavi Mudra' (posture of one or the other individual organs of the body) is one in which the ascetic's internal sight (i.e. his thoughts and sub-conscious mind) is focused on his spiritual objective, and his external sight is fixed in such a way that his eyelids stop flapping (closing and opening). This is the Mudra that is recognized and

lauded by all the scriptures dealing with Tantra form of ritualistic worship as the secret of spiritual success and the one that aids the aspirant in obtaining his objectives (14).

15. The ascetic whose vital winds and sub-conscious become one while his thoughts are focused internally in contemplation during meditation (i.e. when he adopts the Keval Kumbhak and stops to breathe; when he is not even aware whether or not his body is inhaling or exhaling air so much is he submerged in meditation), and at the same time his motionless and half-open eyes look blankly downwards at an imaginary spot in his front, but do not see anything else—verily, this state is called the ‘Khechhari Mudra’.

[In other words, during this Mudra, the internal component of the mind called the sub-conscious, and the external component called the conscious aspect of the mind are both in a state of non-activity and neutrality. The ascetic is so lost in meditation and contemplation that he forgets to even breathe, and though his eyes are half-open he sees nothing because his mind is defunct. It is the mind that registers any sight when it interprets the incoming sensory impulses gathered by the organ of sight known as the eye. The eye merely gathers the impulses that are analyzed and interpreted in the brain as a ‘sight’ of an object. It is the brain or the mind that actually ‘sees’ something, and the eye is merely an instrument to gather information about objects that have a physical form, colour and dimension, and then transfer this information to the brain and let it interpret as sight of that object.]

Since during this Khechhari Mudra the ascetic is focused on the ‘self’ which is the auspicious Atma and the pure consciousness, since his inner being and external being have merged into one unit and harmonized with each other, this Mudra is also known as Vaishnavi Mudra. [In other words, both the terms apply to the same Mudra, and in both the cases the aim of doing this Mudra is auspicious and holy.]

When this Mudra is successfully done, the practitioner is able to experience the presence of the supreme and self-illuminated divine entity that is so unique and paradoxical that it cannot be limited by either defining it as being a ‘Shunya’ or as being ‘A-shunya’.

[The divine entity that is implied here is the ‘consciousness’ that resides in the subtle inner self of all living beings as their Atma or their pure ‘self’. The word ‘Shunya’ literally means a void or vacuum or non-existence, implying something that is as subtle and sublime as for instance the air element or the sky element that are surely present but cannot be seen, touched or grasped to ascertain their physical existence. On the other hand, the word ‘A-shunya’ is the opposite of ‘Shunya’—i.e. it is an object that is not subtle, and therefore it is gross. In other words, the entity referred to here is so unique that it possesses paradoxical qualities—it is both subtle as well as gross, and at the same time it is neither subtle nor gross. It is beyond definitions; it transcends fixed boundaries and criterions. Its existence cannot be denied, but at the same time there is no method of physically testing it in material terms to prove its existence. All these criterions apply on the Atma—it is a subtle entity that no one can ever see but without which both the gross body consisting of the external sense organs, as well as the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect complex of the creature would be of no consequence. The vital winds that are called Pran remain active in the body because of this undefined ‘consciousness’. A dead body too is filled with the wind, but does it show any life? A balloon is filled with air, but can it be called a living being?

Hence, the supreme essence of life that ‘illuminates’ this dark world by infusing it with ‘life’ is the divine entity experienced when the ascetic is successful in doing Vaishnavi or Khechhari Mudra.] (15).

[Note— The word Khechhari is derived from the root ‘Khe’ which stands for the sky, and ‘Chari’ means to move, to wonder or to roam. Therefore, the combined word ‘Khechhari’ means one who can move in the sky.

This Mudra has been graphically described in Gherand Sanhita, Chapter 3, verse no. 25-28, besides the Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 40-42, the entire Canto 2 of the Yog Kundalini Upanishad; and Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 81-93 of Krishna Yajur Veda; as well as in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 52-64 of the Sam Veda tradition, in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 2/1/8 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, and in Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 7, verse nos. 14-15.

The *Khechhari Mudra* is amongst the best and toughest body postures that can be adopted by any ascetic, but at the same time it can empower the practitioner with stupendous mystical and occult powers and potentials. It involves elongation of the tongue by constantly pulling it out and making it flexible by constant flexing, rolling and shaking from side to side. The nerves and veins at the lower end of the tongue, i.e. in its tendon, are cut so as to make them senseless. To obtain success in this, the tongue is smeared with butter and stretched by holding it with an iron tong. This results in the tongue getting sufficiently elongated as to reach the inner opening of the mouth by inverting it backwards, and then it is tucked at the base of the upper palate to close the opening of the nostrils at the roof of the mouth cavity. When the elongated and backwards bent tongue is stuffed here, these openings of the nostrils are closed by it, thereby blocking the flow of air (breath). Meanwhile, the sight is fixed unwaveringly at a point midway between the two eyebrows.

It is believed that the Khechhari Mudra, along with the Vajroli Mudra, was made popular by sage Matyseyanandranath (10th century CE), the great ascetic of medieval times and the moral preceptor of the famed ascetic Guru Gorakhnath.

The *Beej Mantra* of Khechhari Yoga has been described in Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 17-20, and Canto 3, verse no. 1.

The *benefits* of Khechhari Yoga have been listed in—(i) Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 4, verse nos. 15-17, 39-42/2. (ii) Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-4, 21-24, 49. (iii) Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 52-64. (iv) Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 81-93. One such practical benefit is the natural way of contraception as clearly described in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 52-64; and Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 81-93.]

16. An ascetic who remains steadily concentrated on his meditative posture (of Khechhari Mudra as outlined in verse no. 15) as evident from his unblinking and half-open eyes, with the mind and the sub-conscious focused on his spiritual objective, and the sight steadfastly fixed on the tip of the nose, is able to attain steadiness and stability in his meditation. When he is successful in attaining this stage, he is now deemed to be ready to exercise control even over his Surya Naadi (i.e. the Pingla Naadi or the right nostril) and the Chandra Naadi (i.e. the Ida Naadi or the left nostril) so much so that the flow of life-forces (vital airs) through them is stopped by him and they become defunct for all practical purposes.

[In other words, once Khechhari Mudra is successfully practiced, the ascetic is now able to implement the next phase of Yoga—and it is to stop the flow of air or wind through the nostrils. He can now stop breathing, and this means that he can exist in a state

of perpetual 'Keval Kumbhak' (refer verse no. 13/5) when the inhaled air is held inside the body for prolonged periods of time without the need to exhale it. The ascetic does not feel suffocated or bloated at all. The trapped vital winds begin to circulate freely inside the body.]

The extremely sublime, most subtle and indefinable entity on which the ascetic has focused his attention while undertaking this process of Yoga, which is the aim of his spiritual pursuit for which he has stepped on this path in the first place, is a divine entity, a sublime essence called the 'Tattwa' that is self-illuminated, radiant and glorious. This 'Tattwa' (the sublime essence) is devoid of all forms of grossness that are associated with all external things in this world of material sense objects.

Oh Shandilya! You must know it in this truthful way (16).

17. The ascetic focuses the pupils of his eyes on the sublime light or illumination that glows on the tip of his nose during his meditative posture as described above. He is in a completely relaxed state of the mind, and when he views this glorious light and focuses his eyes on it, the eyebrows are slightly raised in a stance that indicates his extreme sense of stunned astonishment and exhilaration at being able to visualize this sublime light that is not ordinarily visible, and at being able to experience the thrill and ecstasy that accompanies this exalted state of existence.

This is the preliminary stage of his spiritual practices, and it helps him to obtain the 'Unmani'¹ state in a short time (17).

[Note—¹The *Unmani* state is a higher and exalted state of existence of the consciousness when it rises above the mundane and the gross, and lives in a sublime state. The word itself has two connotations—one is to rise and lift up, and other is to become indifferent to things that are gross and unattractive. The ascetic who practices the form of Yoga outlined in this Upanishad is able to 'lift' his 'self' from the gross level of existence, 'rise up' and reach an exalted state of existence when he is able to 'see' the sublime Tattwa, or experience the presence in his own inner self the eclectic entity that is the essence of existence and which in common parlance of Vedanta and metaphysics is known as the 'conscious self' or the pure conscious Atma. This Atma is the essence or the Tattwa that is self-illuminated and that is witnessed in the higher stages of Yoga as described in this verse. It is the realisation of this Atma that is the aim of all spiritual pursuits, and it is this realisation of the Atma that is the cosmic Truth known as Brahm which gives the feeling of unmatched exhilaration and ecstasy to the ascetic. That is why he is stunned and his eyebrows are raised in a crooked stance. He had never ever experienced this scintillating source of light earlier in his life, and when he actually 'sees' it, he is taken by surprise and utterly stunned and dazzled by its mere presence.]

17/1. Since this eclectic state is easily reached when one successfully practices the Khechari Mudra, it is advisable for all spiritual aspirants to implement this Mudra.

He first reaches the Unmani state of eclectic existence, and then progresses to reach a higher and more sublime state of exalted existence called 'Yog-Nidra'¹.

A successful aspirant who has achieved the state of Yog-Nidra—or when he can assume the virtual state of remaining asleep vis-à-vis this gross world and the gross body while being active in doing Yoga—acquires such stupendous mystical powers and potentials that he no longer remains under the jurisdiction of Kaal, or the factor of time and circumstance. [In other words, the state of beatitude and felicity that he reaches, the bliss and spiritual ecstasy that he experiences are not limited to the time till he does

Yoga. They become perpetual for him; they become a part of his life. He can conquer death and decay because he can now control his breath and remain in the state of Keval Kumbhak as described in verse nos. 16 and 13/5 respectively.] (17/1).

[Note—¹The word 'Yog' of course means meditation and contemplation, while the word 'Nidra' means to sleep. Hence, the combined word *Yog-Nidra* implies that eclectic state of existence in which the aspirant is virtually 'asleep', i.e. he is in a state of suspended animation when all his external organs are literally defunct, his mind does not register any external impulses, and his sub-conscious too goes into hibernation while doing Yoga. He is not actually sleeping in the conventional sense because he is actively doing Pranayam and Khechari Mudra of Yoga, but 'virtually' sleeping. This 'sleeping' or 'Nidra' state that is obtained as a result of 'Yoga' is named after the latter—i.e. it is called 'Yog-Nidra'. While in the case of ordinary sleep the man's mind is active as it might dream of an imaginary world, but in the case of Yog-Nidra, there is no such world. Hence, the latter closely resembles the third state of conscious existence called the Sushupta state because in both the cases the mind and the sub-conscious are defunct or relegated to the background and the man lives in a state of virtual non-existence.

The difference between the Yog-Nidra and the Sushupta state of existence are two-fold—(i) One is that while the latter case is part of the process of physical sleep when the eyes are closed shut and the man neither visualizes or experiences anything, in the former case this is not true as the eyes are half-open, the practitioner sees a source of light at the tip of his nose, and he is not asleep in the conventional sense of the term 'Nidra'. While a man is actually asleep during the Sushupta state, also called the 'deep sleep state of consciousness', as this state is reached after crossing the Swapna or dreaming state of a man's sleep, in the case of Yog-Nidra the body is not asleep and even the eyes are half open.

And (ii) the Sushupta state is short-lived as sooner or later the sleeping man reverts to his old ways of life when he wakes up, being subjected to all sorts of mental turmoil and agonies, remains engrossed and submerged in the material world of grossness and has no idea of spiritual ecstasy and bliss, but in the Yog-Nidra state this situation does not arise. Since here the breath is stopped as described in verse no. 16, and the ascetic is able to maintain a stable state of the vital winds by being in a Keval Kumbhak state as described in verse no. 13/5 as a result of stoppage of breath, the Yog-Nidra can last indefinitely. Since this stage is reached by practice of certain stringent exercises of Yoga, e.g. the Khechari Mudra and Pranayam, the ascetic becomes trained enough to maintain the calmness and peace of his mind even when he is not actually practicing the Yoga or is in the eclectic state of Yog-Nidra.

In other words, the experience of bliss, the state of mental peace, the sense of spiritual ecstasy, beatitude and accomplishment etc. that he finds in the Yog-Nidra state becomes natural to him and it lasts even if he wakes up from his meditative trance as compared to ordinary sleep when he might reach the Sushupta state or the deep sleep state of consciousness for some moments but when he wakes up to the realities of this physical world he forgets his earlier state of peaceful existence and begins to be tossed and turned by the events of this world.]

18. Oh Shandilya! Concentrate your mind and remain focused on the eternal source of spiritual energy that resides in your own self (i.e. remain submerged in meditating upon the pure consciousness that shines inside).

Keep the mind and its sub-conscious aspect energized and actively involved in this practice. Look at the subtle and sublime aspect of yourself by employing your faculties of mind and intelligence, and turn inwards instead of outwards in order to attain

success in your spiritual endeavours. This would help you to remain happy and joyous; this will enable you to lead a cheerful life full of contentedness and bliss.

[That is, do not allow yourself to lose sight of your spiritual goal that is eternally divine and sublime by nature, and never lose guard and become involved in things that are gross and impermanent. Never lose hope by initial setbacks, but persevere and remain focused. Strive to realise the pure consciousness that is eternal and sublime by nature with the aid of Yoga, and this realisation would illuminate your inner-self with a glorious light by removing the darkness of ignorance and delusions regarding the Truth that has mired your existence till now. By following and implementing the teachings of this Upanishad you would be able to live a fulfilled life full of spiritual contentedness, happiness and cheer. You would not want anything of this perishable gross world as you would have tasted the supreme nectar of eternal spiritual bliss and happiness that would make all the pleasures and comforts of this material gross world taken together as tasting bitter, sour or bland in comparison.] (18).

19. One must visualize that the Atma or pure consciousness is established in the subtle space of the sky (i.e. in the subtle heart). As a result, this subtle sky or heart becomes illuminated and sublime due to the august presence of this divine and holy entity.

This noble and grand idea must be extended to cover the entire creation; it should be holistic in its import and reach. Hence, one must practice to cultivate the eclectic idea that everything in this existence or creation is filled with the same subtle space of the sky, and therefore the same Atma is also established in the entire creation. In other words, the Atma that resides in the subtle space of one's own heart is the same that resides uniformly throughout the length and breadth of this existential world. Think that there is nothing besides it (a vacant space and the Atma) in this world or creation (19).

[Note—There is spin-off of this notion of the Atma living in a subtle sky at the macro level of creation. The sky is a vacant space; it has no solid existence like wood or iron. To say that the entire creation is filled with the space of the sky and that the Atma, which is pure consciousness, lives uniformly in it is a metaphoric way of saying that the world is hollow from the inside, there is nothing worth bothering in it, and the only thing that is of any consequence in this void is the pure conscious Atma. If the Atma is removed from this creation the latter would be reduced to a huge vacant space with no life in it.

It is just like the case of candle burning inside a large empty hall—where the 'candle' is the self-illuminated Atma, the pure consciousness, and the 'emptiness of the hall' is the vast creation which would be dark, empty and foreboding without this only source of light called the Atma.]

20. A wise ascetic should not worry or bother about the external world (i.e. the gross exterior world of material sense objects and the equally gross body and its sense organs) as well as the internal world (i.e. the subtle world of the mind and intellect along with the various internal needs of the body). That is, he should become absolutely neutral and indifferent. He must abandon all sorts of worries and remain submerged in the thoughts of the eternal consciousness. [Since it is the mind that is the cause of all worries and thoughts, when it is focused on the Atma during meditation and contemplation it is natural that all worries, real or imaginary, would have no existence. The result would be that the ascetic would be in a perpetual state of bliss and happiness.] (20).

21. Even as camphor vanishes put in fire and salt when it is put (and gets dissolved) in water, the mind and the sub-conscious of an ascetic who is perpetually submerged in doing Yoga, who remains in a state of meditative trance, who is ever contemplative, also merges and becomes one with the supreme Tattwa or essence of creation, the universal Truth and Reality of creation. [This Tattwa is the pure super Consciousness that is the universal Truth of life and existence. Without this Truth the creation is null and void.] (21).

22. The term 'Mana' applies to being aware of or conscious of anything that is worthy of being known, or to perceive something that can be learnt by the application of the mind and sub-conscious.

Therefore, in the state of existence when the mind becomes defunct or non-active as during Yoga, the ascetic would not perceive anything, he would not be aware of anything. Except by neutralizing the faculty of the mind that makes a creature aware of anything or perceive something in this world, and at the same time diverting one's attention from the world with its countless sense objects and temptations as well as tribulations, there is no other way of becoming neutral, detached from, indifferent to and unaffected by the circumstances of existence; there is no other path by which one can remain emotionally steady, calm and unmoved; there is no other way by which all worries and concerns could be overcome; there is no other options that can help one to remain focused on one's spiritual goal without being subjected to innumerable distractions and disturbances that constantly bombard one's mind and the inner-self. [That is, it is of paramount importance that one exercises stellar control over one's Mana.] (22).

23. By voluntarily and purposefully eliminating the objects that attract the attention of the mind, one is able to free the latter from the former's hooks. This helps one to get rid of the Mana; it helps the ascetic or any spiritual aspirant to dissolve the Mana. [When the attention is diverted away from the object of desires, the mind would stop thinking about it, and this is equivalent to eliminating the Mana—i.e. the thoughts of the mind and emotional attachment of the heart with the object of desire—from interfering with one's spiritual resolve, and attempting to tamper with it or break it.]

When the Mana is eliminated or dissolved, what remains is only one sublime entity known as 'Kaivalya'. [When all desires pertaining to this body and the world, both at the gross level as well as the subtle level are done away with, what remains is the sublime entity called pure conscious Atma and the Truth. Since it is one of its kind and non-dual, it is honoured by the epithet 'Kaivalya'—literally meaning exactly this, 'one and only one'.] (23).

[Note-- How the Mana creates the world has been explained in Yogshika Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 6, verse nos. 58-61, 70.

How the Mana acts as a fetter has been elucidated in the Yogshika Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 59-61.

How the Mana can be controlled or dissolved or disassociated from its involvement with the world has been explained in the following Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition also—Kathrudra Upanishad, verse nos. 39-40; Yogshika Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 62-65, 69-71.]

24. Oh great sage! There are two important ways to eliminate or dissolve the 'Chitta'—the sub-conscious, the memory and the aspect of the mind that thinks and focuses on anything or event. One is 'Yoga', and the other is 'Gyan'.

Yoga in this context is to destroy or eliminate the various 'Vrittis' of the Chitta. [The word 'Vritti' refers to the numerous natural inclinations and tendencies of the mind that are inherent in all the living beings. It is these Vrittis that hook the mind to the material objects of the world. Once the Vrittis are done away with, the mind would no longer be attracted to the world and its material sense objects.]

Gyan is to see the truth about anything in its essential form; Gyan is to have the deep insight into things and be able to see or peer behind the veil to uncover the secret that lies behind it; Gyan is to see beyond the apparent and realise the hidden truth and unravel the esoteric secret of an entity. [In the context of one's spiritual pursuit this means that one is able to see the falsehood and impermanence of the gross world along with its deluding and entrapping nature, and on the other hand realise the 'truth' about the subtle and sublime entity known as the Atma which is the pure consciousness that is not visible or tangible in the conventional sense but is nevertheless the only worthy thing that is honoured by the title of being the 'Absolute Truth' in this entire creation. The obstacle in this realisation are the vagrant Chitta and fickle Mana that do not know what to pursue and what not to. Hence, once they are controlled the aspirant's spiritual path becomes free from all impediments, and self-realisation or Truth-realisation becomes a reality.] (24).

[Note—The Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 3, verse no. 67 describes how to overcome the various habitual faults of the mind, called the Chitta Vrittis.

Chitta is an integral component of the Antahakaran or the 'inner self' of a living being. This has been described in—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda's Shaarirako Upanishad of, verse no. 4; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 101-102; (b) Shukla Yajur Veda's Paingal Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 9, Canto 2, verse no. 3; Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 6.]

25. When the Mana (mind) is brought under one's strict control, when one establishes and asserts his authority over its wayward nature and natural habit of remaining restless and in a constant state of flux, it is certain that the Mana can be calmed down and tamed. In other words, it is not that one cannot tame or control the Mana; the Mana cannot supersede one's will-power and determination should one decide to put the Mana under leash.

As soon as the restless and fidgety nature of the Mana is calmed down or brought under control, the world with its tempting material objects and their charms is automatically eliminated. [Verse nos. 23-24 above describes how.] (25).

26. Just like the case that the world would gradually come to an end should the sun's movement across the sky stop or when it stops shining, so is the case with the world that would also come to an end or cease to exist as soon as Vairagya (total renunciation, detachment and dispassion towards the material world and its sense objects) sprouts in the heart and mind (the Mana) of an aspirant as a result of company of scriptures (i.e. by studying them) and by the communion of wise and realised saints (where these scriptures

are explained and discussed so as to clarify doubts about them in the mind of the spiritual aspirant).

[This is because it is the mind that is actually responsible for making the creature aware of the world. This is evident when we are lost in our thoughts—the world flows by but we are totally oblivious of it. Suppose a man is thinking of something, then he might appear to be intently looking at a particular object because his eyes are directed towards it but his mind does not register the sight and therefore the man does not actually ‘see’ that thing inspite of his eyes being wide open and directly looking at it. It is the mind that actually sees, hears, tastes, feels or smells anything, it is the mind that actually inspires a man to do anything, to go anywhere, to accept or reject anything, to speak or not to speak anything, and so on and so forth. It is the mind that tells him that the world is attractive and must be sought; the same mind can create distaste for the world or outright hatred for it if it is not favourably inclined towards the same world.

Hence, when the man develops detachment from the world and its illusionary charms that comes with understanding of its true nature, he would be disenchanted with it and develop disinterest in it. The man seeks this world and its material objects with the main objective of finding happiness, joy, pleasure and comfort. When he discovers that he is being taken for a ride by the illusionary charms of the equally illusionary world, when he learns that whatever happiness or comfort that he finds in this world are inherently transient and impermanent as well as illusive by nature, when he is enlightened that this world is delusory and hollow from the inside, and there is nothing of any worthwhile in it—it is then that he loses his interest in it, and instead turns his attention towards the entity that would give him eternal, sustainable, truthful and real happiness and peace, real tranquility and bliss. He then strives to find out the truth, and for it he turns towards the scriptures that expound upon this Truth. He also seeks the company of wise and enlightened souls who have understood the scriptures and have implemented their teachings in their personal lives to actually verify and establish this Truth. This is how true Vairagya or renunciation and detachment towards everything that is delusory and impermanent develop in the spiritual seeker’s heart and mind—i.e. his Mana and Chitta combine.] (26).

27-29. First of all, one must develop total and sincere disinterest in all the attractions of the material world and its sense objects. He must control his various Vrittis which are nothing but the natural tendency of the mind to swerve towards the comforts, pleasures and charms of the world along with the desire to gratify the urges of the sense organs of the gross body. [These Vrittis are inherent to all the living beings and an integral part of their overall mental setup. Refer verse no. 24 above.]

Then, as a second step, the aspirant should practice constant, consistent and persistent ‘Dhyan’—i.e. he should focus his mind and its faculties on the Truth and always contemplate upon it and remember it. [27.]

This is to be accompanied by having a firm faith and unwavering conviction in the existence and the truth of the universal ‘Tattwa’—literally the only universal essence and the inviolable elementary spiritual truth of existence. [This ‘Tattwa’ is the Atma or the pure consciousness that is the only spiritual ‘truth’ in creation. This ‘consciousness’ is called the subtle and sublime Atma when it resides in the body of the individual creature, and it is known as the supreme transcendental almighty and all-pervading Brahm when it

is considered in its macrocosmic and all-encompassing form. The word 'Tattwa' means something that is fundamental to and at the very foundation of everything else; something that is basic and essential because without it all the rest of the things would lose their meaning and existence; something without which nothing else matters.]

Regular and persistent practice of Dhyān and meditating upon the Tattwa, i.e. regularly doing meditation and contemplating upon the spiritual Truth with a firmness of mind, faith in the scriptures and advice of learned people, and steadiness of purpose, it is possible that the movement of the Pran (vital winds) inside the body stops. In other words, the Pran Vayu, the vital winds present inside the body as well as the breath, is brought under one's control. The air is pulled in (inhaled) gradually by the process of Purak (as described in verse no. 5, section 6, and verse nos. 1-2, 13/1-13/4) and then retained inside the body for prolonged periods of time in the state of Kumbhak. That is, the practitioner reaches the state of 'Kaivalya Kumbhak' (as described earlier in verse no. 13/5, 17/5). [28.]

In this way, constant focusing of attention on meditation and contemplation helps the spiritual aspirant to remain in a perpetual state of meditation when the mind is completely annihilated and all its activities stopped. That is, the Mana is brought under one's control (as described in verse nos. 18-25).

When the aspirant utters or repeats the Mantra OM in the later and higher stages of Yoga as described herein above, he is actually able to experience the reverberations of the subtle vibrations emanating from this cosmic sound of OM. He is able to experience the resonance of OM throughout his being; he feels submerged in a sea of cosmic vibrations surging all around him. This helps him to realise and learn about the essential meaning of the term 'Sushupta' state of consciousness which is also called the deep sleep state.

He becomes so exhilarated and consumed by the thrill and ecstasy produced by the resonance of OM that he forgets about the movement of the vital winds in his body. These vital winds called Pran come to a standstill because of the sudden surge of thrill radiating through the being of the spiritual aspirant. [The stoppage of the flow of the vital winds here is caused by the spasmodic tautness of the muscles due to excessive thrill and ecstasy that comes with titillation created in the body by the vibrations of the nerves by the sound of OM.]

For so long as the aspirant continues to chant or repeat OM, the thrill and its accompanying ecstasy continues unabated, and with it follows the holding of the breath and its natural spin-off in the form of Kaivalya Kumbhak. [29.] (27-29).

30. When the 'Ghanti' (the epiglottis) located at the rear end of the palate, i.e. the root of the tongue, is pressed carefully by the tip of the tongue (by inverting the latter—a process described in detail in Yog Kundalini Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 29-49), the Pran Vayu (the vital wind; the breath) is controlled and its movement stopped. It can now be diverted into the cavity of the skull, i.e. the Pran Vayu enters the upper part of the head. [When the flap covering the wind pipe is carefully pressed, the air in the lower part of the body is eased into the cavity of the skull instead of moving out of the nose.] (30).

31. Gradually by constant practice, the Pran (breath; the vital wind) loses its vigour, force and strength while it moves in the area between the 'Ghanti' described above and the tip of the nose, a distance of roughly twelve fingers. [That is, by constant practice of Yoga, the breath is so trained that it begins to move progressively slowly while being inhaled and exhaled. This happens because the metabolic rate decreases during, and as a result of, Pranayam and other Yogic exercises when the breathing becomes shallow and slows down considerably.]

So, the flow of the Pran can be controlled by constant and persistent practice (31).

32. When the sight of the ascetic or practitioner of Yoga becomes fixed at a hypothetical point in the vacant sky situated at a distance of roughly twelve fingers away from the tip of the nose, it is said that then the movement of the Pran Vayu becomes still.

[This refers to the Unmani Mudra described in verse nos. 16-17. It is a virtual trance-like state of the mind when it registers nothing and goes virtually into hibernation. With the metabolism almost at a standstill, the practitioner feels no need for breathing vigorously. The breath first moves slowly, almost in an imperceptible manner, and with practice it can be completely stopped. The latter state is the 'Keval Kumbhak' Mudra described earlier in verse no. 13/5.] (32).

33. When the spiritual aspirant is able to have a divine vision of the 'Tarak Brahm' (i.e. when he is able to experience the supreme ecstasy and bliss of conscious realisation) that comes when the mind is focused in the region of the forehead located between the two eyebrows (the area of the cerebrum) while practicing Yoga, all the activities that are related to this gross world are stopped, and the mind begins to find its rest and peace. All the numerous desires, wishes, aspirations and longings of the mind are eliminated; it wants nothing more.

[This is because it is the mind that actually receives and analyses the different inputs having their origin in the external world. It is the mind that then instructs the body to do anything in response. It is the mind that motivates the aspirant to perform deeds and act in a particular way in this world. With the mind becoming defunct, or when it becomes absolutely calmed down and loses all interest in the external world, it is obvious that the activities of the world would come to a naught.

Secondly, when the mind remains focused in doing Yoga, when its attention is fixed on something in which it begins to find greater and more enduring bliss and enjoyment, it would no longer wander here and there in the external world like a vagrant. The mind swerves towards this material world of sense objects because it finds happiness and joy in it; it finds pleasure and comfort in it. When the mind, on the other hand, keeps its self busy in concentrating in doing Yoga and finds a greater source of comfort and bliss in it than what it got out of the external world, it would easily turn towards this new source. So, when the mind finds that by focusing its attention and efforts in the various meditative exercises give it a greater degree of bliss and ecstasy, it would stick to them and abandon the world.] (33).

34. When the ascetic is able to experience that supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness that is most auspicious by nature, that is revealed only in the form of

Pranav (represented by the cosmic sound of OM), and in which there is no trace of doubts or confusions whatsoever—it is then that the Pran is said to stop its movement.

[When the practitioner of Yoga hears the cosmic Naad, which is visualized and described in the form of the monosyllabic word OM, while meditating, he is so overwhelmed by the thrill created by its resonance that he experiences a stupendous amount of spiritual bliss surging through his entire being, overflowing him and completely submerging him in its tide.

He becomes absolutely certain about it because of the fact that he has experienced it first hand and not only heard of it.

The Pran's movement stop because of the ecstasy that accompanies the hearing of OM and the titillation that it creates in the nerves, as the practitioner is so absolutely stunned and dumbstruck by this experience that his muscles and brain stop functioning. This may be a momentary experience in the beginning, but over time and practice it becomes robust and permanent.] (34).

35. Oh sage! When the spiritual aspirant is able to experience the presence of the vacant space of the subtle sky in the region of the heart, the Mana (here referring to the 'heart' because it is the latter that is associated with emotions, sentiments and various longings and infatuations that a creature has or develops in life) becomes free from all Vasanas, and instead begins to gain composure and calmness of demeanours.

When the heart too becomes vacant of emotions and desires along with the annihilation or dissolution of the mind, it is then that all the worldly Vasanas (worldly desires, passions, yearnings and longings) are truly dispensed with. It then becomes possible to remain focused on one's spiritual goal.

When this stage is reached, the movement of the Pran, or the vibrations of the Pranic energy inside the body of the ascetic, stops.

[The word 'Mana' here refers to the heart as well as the mind. It is the heart that shows various emotions and sentiments; it is this aspect of the heart that endears something to a man or makes him long for it or be infatuated with it. If the heart is not involved, the mind would not be fully able to focus its self on anything. Even those things that are the direct function of the mind and are its exclusive domain too depend on the heart. For instance, study and learning are functions exclusive to the mind, but then it is normal to say 'learn a thing by heart'. But the heart depends on the mind too. Even if the heart is very fond of anything or strongly longs for a particular thing, the mind can always supersede it and firmly deny access to the much-wanted thing should it decide that it is not in the interest of the creature.

So, it is during the higher stages of Yoga that the heart too becomes vacant of emotions and desires along with the annihilation or dissolution of the mind. When they work in tandem it is then that all the worldly Vasanas (worldly desires and longings) are truly dispensed with. It then becomes possible to remain focused on one's spiritual goal of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation.] (35).

36/1. In the above manner, there are a number of ways prescribed by different wise men by which a spiritual aspirant can exercise control over the movement of his Pran. In other words, by constant practice and employing a method best suited for his individual needs

and temperaments, he can control the flow of the vital winds, and along with them the various life-factors that require regulation and regularization (36/1).

36/2. The aspiring ascetic should constrict the Kundalini and pull it upwards. This would open the hitherto-closed door for his Moksha (liberation and deliverance).

[This refers to the activation of the Kundalini and opening of the clogged Naadis in the body. The Kundalini is a coiled subtle cosmic energy center of the body that lies at the lower end of the spinal cord, blocking it with one of its ends. The subtle energy of the Kundalini represents the dynamism of the consciousness present in the body of the living being. The Naadi is the general term used for all the tubular ducts present inside the body through which all the life sustaining energy and impulses flow in the body. During Yoga, when the vital winds are heated and activated, they shake the Kundalini and loosen it up. Then they push up through the Kundalini which opens the blocked mouth of the Sushumna Naadi, the main nerve of the spinal cord, and snakes up it to finally reach the top of the head.

The combined force of the vital winds and the dynamic energy of the Kundalini opens-up or unties the various Granthis (knots) and Chakras (subtle energy centers of the body lying between the lower end of the body and the top of the head) en-route to the top of the head. With these openings, a burst of immense spiritual energy is experienced by the ascetic. The Pran or life-consciousness reaches the top of the head, and when all the conditions are favourable and enough pressure is built up, it finally escapes out of the body through the Brahm-Randhra, the hair-like slit present on the top of the skull. It is called 'Moksha', because the Atma, the consciousness present in the gross body of the ascetic, finds its permanent freedom by breaking free from the fetters of the gross body and escaping into the vast fathomless sky much like a caged bird finding its freedom when it escapes through the trap-door of the cage.

It is called 'Moksha' also because it is the final escape of the consciousness along with the vital winds or Pran which, having escaped from the confines of the gross body through the Brahm-Randhra, merges with the cosmic wind or the air element present outside the body to become one and inseparable from it. The 'Pran' will no longer re-enter the body—meaning its liberation is once and for all; it is its final freedom from confinements and limitations which are against its natural temperament and habit of being free and unbound. [A simple illustration would help explain this concept. When we blow air (breath) into the rubber balloon, it swells up and acquires a shape quite different from its original form as a piece of lifeless latex. The fully blown balloon jumps and hops to indicate that the air that is trapped inside is restless to get out of its prison in the form of the body of the balloon. If we leave this balloon for a long time we would observe that the air gradually seeps out of it on its own. If we keep the air agitated by constantly punching and kicking the balloon, it burst out with force. The point of the matter is that the air resists being bounded and butted, it needs freedom—this is because the air or the wind element is habituated to being free, unshackled and unbound; it is its natural habit and temperament to be free and unshackled.]

The Atma, which is the 'true self' of all living beings and is pure consciousness, is also a synonym of Pran, along with the vital wind and other life-factors in creation which are generally regarded as Pran of a creature, as both the terms mean 'life'. Hence, when it is said that the 'Pran' escapes from limitations or confines of the gross body to

enlarge and expand to cover the whole space of the sky once it comes out into the open sky outside, it is implied that the Atma—the ‘self’ of the ascetic—too has found its Moksha.

Prior to this final freedom, when the Pran had reached the area of the forehead between the two eyebrows en-route to the Brahm-Randhra the aspirant is able to experience a thrilling sensation which gives the aspirant extreme bliss and ecstasy. This is the moment of self-realisation when the ascetic experiences the bliss that is associated with being near and close to the cosmic source of beatitude and felicity called Brahm. This experience is a fore-runner and acts as a prelude for the final bliss, beatitude and felicity that awaits him when his Pran would escape from the Brahm-Randhra to give him freedom from all his agonies and torments.] (36/2).

36/3. The Kundalini lies in a dormant or sleeping state by covering and blocking the mouth of the path (i.e. the Sushumna Naadi) through which it would have to finally move out in the aspirant’s ultimate quest for Moksha, or spiritual liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

The Kundalini wraps around this path like a serpent coiled around a tube, tightly clasping it in its embrace and blocking its opening with its hood.

[As stated in verse no. 36/2, the Kundalini represents the dynamic aspect of the consciousness present in the body of the creature. Normally for the un-initiated creature it is lying in a ‘sleeping state’ which is a metaphoric way of saying that the ignorant creature is unable to know or recognize his true astounding potentials. He does not know that a mighty source of spiritual and mystical power is hidden inside his own body much like the musk hidden in the belly of the musk-deer. It only requires igniting and then nothing would be beyond reach. This ignorance is the reason why the creature is always under pain and suffers from this or that agony; this is the reason why he feels that he is powerless and crippled; this is the cause of his fetters and bondages to this world and the body; this is why he needs the prop of various rituals and doing so many things in order to find ways to free himself from the shackle of this body and the world.

But once enlightenment and awareness dawns upon him he realises that should he fire up this Kundalini by means of the process described in the Upanishads, his deliverance and freedom is certain and within his reach. This ignorance of one’s spiritual potentials is metaphorically called the ‘sleeping Kundalini’, while its removal and the dawn of enlightenment and awareness of one’s inherent spiritual strength is called the ‘rising of the dormant spiritual energy’ in the form of the awakened Kundalini.

The Kundalini is visualized in the form of a snake that lies coiled when asleep. When it is coaxed with a stick it rises up and holds its hood to hiss violently. The same thing happens with the Kundalini. When it is coaxed with the heated vital winds during the process of Yoga that is especially designed to activate the Kundalini, the latter is shaken and stirred. It stands up like a snake holding its hood high and hissing. The heat and the pressure exerted by the vital winds help to push the energy of the Kundalini into the Sushumna Naadi. This is called the opening of the pathway to Brahm because this Naadi leads up right up to the top of the head where the ascetic experiences the bliss of Brahm-realisation.] (36/3).

36/4. An ascetic who practices regularly to make the Kundalini activated, and keep it activated, is able to attain Mukti (liberation and deliverance as narrated above).

If the Kundalini (i.e. the subtle cosmic energy that is present inside the body as the dynamism of pure consciousness) rests in the area above the throat, the ascetic is able to find Mukti. Such an aspirant finds enlightenment and self-realisation.

On the other hand, if the Kundalini remains below the throat the aspirant remains mired in ignorance and delusions. Such a man remains trapped and bonded in fetters of ignorance. He cannot find freedom from his spiritual shackles.

[In other words, if the ascetic is able to focus his attention in the forehead and contemplate upon the supreme consciousness that is a fount of extreme bliss and happiness, he finds liberation and deliverance from the uncountable torments and agonies that are inherent to this gross world. This is because he would have reached the sublime state of self-realisation; he would have risen above the mundane world and meditate on the sublime consciousness by focusing his mind on higher goals of life symbolized by the upper part of the body above the throat, as it is 'head' or 'chief' area of the body where the commanding centre called the brain is situated. He is able to attain enlightenment and self-realisation.

On the other hand, if he remains mired in the lowly affairs of the gross world as symbolized by the attention being focused in the lower part of the body below the throat, the aspirant is deemed to be living in a spiritual void surrounded by delusions and ignorance. Such a man would be more concerned with filling his stomach, looking after the needs of his body and enjoying the pleasures of the sense organs rather than pursuing anything of higher value in spiritual terms. The enlightened man on the other hand would be least bothered about the grosser aspects of creation represented by the lower part of the gross body, and more concerned with noble and auspicious thoughts and pursuance of sublime goals of life symbolized by the upper part or the head where the brain is located. It is here that Brahm is said to have his symbolic abode in the body of the creature.] (36/4).

36/5. The Kundalini energy rises up and arrives at the head through the Sushumna Naadi instead of the other two paths open to it, i.e. the Ida and the Pingla Naadis. Therefore, the Sushumna Naadi is the one that takes the aspirant to the divine and supreme abode of Lord Vishnu.

[The Sushumna Naadi goes right up to the top of the skull, while the other two Naadis stop much below it. Refer verse no. 11 of section 4 of this Canto no. 1. It is in the region of the head that the supreme transcendental Brahm is said to have his abode. Lord Vishnu is none other than Brahm personified. So, since the Sushumna Naadi helps the ascetic in his 'self' realisation and Brahm realisation, it is said to be the pathway that leads one to the divine abode of Lord Vishnu. This is why the Sushumna Naadi is also called the Vishnu Naadi as well as the Brahm Naadi.

Besides this, meditation and contemplation are exercises that require intense concentration of the mind and intellect. When the combined efforts of the mind-intellect lead to self-realisation and experiencing of bliss, it is most convincing for the ascetic. This is true enlightenment as it does not require further testing and proving. It is a sublime state of consciousness that is a metaphor for Brahm-realisation.] (36/5).

37. The entire process of meditation (Yoga) involving the vital winds (Vayu) should be done with true dedication and faith, with proper coordination of the mind-intellect, the heart and the gross organs of the body. A wise and erudite practitioner should not allow his mind to swerve towards anything else or think of anything other than concentrating on the process of Yoga. He should not allow the mind to be distracted by anything that would disturb its focus and meddle with its concentration on Yoga. He should restrain the natural tendency of the mind to be attracted towards material comforts and pleasures of the world, or to strive for gratifying the sense organs of the body, and avoid the rigors demanded by Yoga, especially the process of Pranayam, or the process by which the vital winds are control and their powers harnessed for the purpose of reaching one's spiritual goal.

[In other words, the process of Pranayam which involves control of the vital winds and harnessing their stupendous powers and potentials to help the spiritual aspirant realise the glorious consciousness with its radiant splendour should involve a proper coordination between each individual unit of the body. It should be taken in a holistic manner and done with firm determination to reach one's desired spiritual objective. Yoga should be done with full concentration and sincerity, and not just to while away the time. It should be done with faith and conviction, and not merely to test its efficacy or veracity.

Besides this, the aspirant must watch out for any signs of distractions of the mind and the heart which together are called the 'Mana', or any indication that they are not fully focused on and committed to his spiritual goal. This is important because the Mana is the instrument which is needed by the aspirant to succeed in his spiritual endeavours, and if this instrument is blunt and not working in its prime shape, reaching one's objective would be impossible. If the vehicle is rickety, if its parts are not working properly, reaching one's destination becomes uncertain and riddled with problems. Hence, if the mind is not fully controlled and focused in Yoga, if the heart is not fully involved and committed to Yoga, the result would be far below expectations, and the efficiency with which the vital winds can be controlled to aid in one spiritual pursuit would also suffer in equal proportion to the degree of distraction.] (37).

38. It is wrong to suggest or say that one should not worship Lord Vishnu on a particular day or night. Rather, Lord Vishnu should be worshipped at all times, and not only in the day-time or in the night-time. [In other words, it is incredulous and nonsensical to suggest that worship or honouring of the Supreme Being is prohibited on any particular day or night as it is inauspicious for such worship or honour. The Lord can be shown respects anytime, at all times. Whenever the Lord is shown respect that time itself becomes auspicious. Again, it is equally incongruous to say that the Lord should be worshipped only in the day, or only at a fixed time of the day. The Lord can be worshipped and paid obeisance to any time of the day or night.] (38).

39. Oh Shandilya! The divine entity (here referring to the pure consciousness called the Atma) that lives in the subtle space of the heart is the one that drives the five sense organs, and is also the entity that kindles enlightenment and wisdom in the aspirant.

[The gross body has five sense organs of perception such as the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and the skin. These sense organs are made functional and active only as long as there is 'life and consciousness' in the body, for a dead body does not see, or

hear, or smell, or taste, or feel anything though all these five organs are present in it. Hence, it is the pure conscious Atma, which incidentally is also the 'true self' of the creature that actually makes these five organs work and carry on with their assigned duties or functions. The same argument applies to the five organs of action such as the hand, the leg, the mouth, the genital and the excretory.

Similarly, it is the Atma, the pure consciousness residing inside the gross body, that inspires a man to think, to ponder, to contemplate, and to research the 'truth'. A dead body or one from which the consciousness has left would not think or meditate. Hence, it is the Atma residing in the subtle space of the heart that is responsible for a creature's desire to acquire truthful spiritual knowledge, and to be successful in actually acquiring it. In other words, it is the Atma that kindles the desire in a man to become wise, erudite and enlightened, and abandon the darkness of ignorance and delusions.]

The Khechari Mudra is also dependent upon this divine entity that resides in the subtle space of the heart of the spiritual aspirant. [Again, it is the consciousness present in the body that not only inspires but actually enables the man to undertake the arduous exercise of doing Khechari Mudra, which incidentally is the toughest of all the Mudras of Yoga, and then gives him the courage, energy and strength to persevere with it till success is completely achieved.

In short, it is the pure conscious Atma that provides the impetus for all that the creature does. It is the Atma that not only drives his gross body but also his spiritual inclinations.]

Hence, you (Shandilya) must always strive to remain focused on this divine entity. In other words, you must never lose sight of the pure conscious Atma that resides in the subtle heart while you do anything in this world. This Atma must be your spiritual goal in all meditative and contemplative exercises (39).

40. The vital wind (breath or Pran) flows continuously between the left and the right Naadis (i.e. between the Ida and the Pingla Naadis representing the left and the right nostrils respectively). In other words, the vital life-consciousness flows in the Sushumna Naadi as it lies between the Ida and the Pingla Naadis that lie to its left and right respectively.

The Khechari Mudra is also focused on this area. That is, the mind is focused on the life-consciousness that flows through the Sushumna Naadi while one does the Khechari Mudra. The point where the mind is to be focused during the Khechari Mudra is the tip of the nose as well as the central point between the two eyebrows that lies at the root of the nose. There is no doubt about it (40).

41. The area between the Ida and the Pingla Naadis is like the yawning depths of the fathomless cosmic sky which devours anything that falls in it. This air or wind that enters this area is devoured by it. In other words, when the ascetic is deeply engrossed in doing the Khechari Mudra when his mind is totally focused in the area mentioned here, his breathing stops. The ascetic enters in a deep trance-like state. [Refer verse no. 15-19 of this section no. 7. The area referred to here is the point in the forehead that lies between the two eyebrows and at the root of the nose. It can be compared to the cosmic 'black hole' which is so mysterious and powerful that it swallows even the light that attempts to

pass through it. It is a complete vacuum which would not allow anything to escape its grasp.]

The Khechari Mudra is also established there or done there, and it is here that the 'Truth' is also found. [The 'Truth' referred here is the awareness of the self and the pure consciousness that is realised when the mind is focused in the area referred to in this verse. The Khechari Mudra is the meditative posture that helps the ascetic in this realisation and experiencing the glorious radiance and magnificence of the Atma and the 'self'. This is why the 'third eye of wisdom' is said to be located in the forehead between the two eyebrows and at the root of the nose. Refer verse no. 42/1 below.] (41).

42/1. Between the Chandra (Moon) Naadi and the Surya (Sun) Naadi is situated an area that hangs in space without support. It is a vacant sky, and the Khechari Mudra is symbolically established there, or it is here that one focuses one's attention while doing the Khechari Mudra. It also implies that when one mind and attention are focused in the area between the Chandra and Surya Naadis while one does the Khechari Mudra, he is so lost in meditation that this world and the body cease to exist for him. He becomes light and subtle to such an extreme that all his sense organs, along with the mind itself, goes into a virtual sleep-like state called the 'Sushupta state' when nothing matters for the ascetic; it is the state of existence when he is completely neutral and disinterested in everything in this gross world. He is like a man suspended in the void of the deep sky high above the earth between the moon and the sun. It is a state of total numbness of the senses that are accustomed to being attracted towards the grosser aspects of this creation.

[The idea expressed in this verse is exactly the same as in verse no. 41. The 'Chandra Naadi' is the Ida Naadi, and the 'Surya Naadi' is the Pingla Naadi—refer verse no. 11 of section 4 of this Canto 1. The area between them is neutral as the heat of the Sun is neutralized by the coolness of the Moon. It is like the center of a bar magnet which is neutral, and it neither attracts nor repels anything. When the ascetic becomes focused on this area, he lives in a state of trance which is like living in suspended animation. It is like being in the deep space of the sky much above the earth's gravitational pull when everything is suspended in mid-air.

The word 'Khechar' refers to someone who lives or moves in the vacant space of the sky, e.g. the bird. The metaphysical import of this vacuum is that when the ascetic is successful in doing the Khechari Mudra, he becomes emotionless and completely neutral. He loses all interests in the world and its material sense objects. He is totally oblivious of his own body. He is just like an object hanging without support in the sky; he is like the earth hanging without support between the sun and the moon.

Modern science has established that all the celestial bodies of the solar system, such as the earth, the moon etc. stay in their respective position in the bottomless bowls of the cosmos due to some invisible force of Nature called the mutual gravitational pull exerted by one on the other, and by the sun on all of them. The sun itself is held in position by some greater force operating at the level of the milky-way or the galaxy of which the entire solar system is a minute and fractional part.

Hence, a delicate balance is established between the gross and the subtle. The invisible force that helps to establish this balance is the 'Truth' that even modern science has accepted. Even as science endeavours to find the grand Truth behind all physical phenomena, metaphysics too strives to find the Truth behind all mystical experiences

and observations. It is this mystical and unexplained 'Truth' that is being referred to in verse no. 41 above.] (42/1).

42/2. The Khechhari Mudra is successfully accomplished when the tongue is sufficiently elongated and made flexible by a complicated process of piercing it, rubbing it and pulling it over time so that it can be inverted and tucked inside the throat, and then made to wriggle into the cavity of the skull from the inside. During this arduous enterprise, the eyesight is fixed in the central point of the eyebrows. [The detailed process of elongation of the tongue and how it is tucked inside the throat to accomplish the Khechhari Mudra is described in Yog Kundalini Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 28-49.]

When both the tongue as well as the subtle aspect of the mind are focused in the subtle sky represented by the hollow space of the skull, and when the tongue develops a natural tendency to move up instead of downwards, it is only then the aspirant can hope to taste the nectar of Amrit.

[In other words, if the tongue derives pleasure in talking about spiritual matters or about things concerning higher, sublime and subtle values of life, when the tongue desires to taste the nectar of spiritual bliss and ecstasy that drips during moments of self-realisation when the pure consciousness is experienced or witnessed first hand, when the tongue wishes to talk about the eclectic and sublime consciousness and ways to realise it instead of wasting time in talking about mundane matters of the deluding and material world which is perishable and entrapping, when the tongue has no interest in either talking about worldly things or has any desire for tasting delicious things of this gross world, it is only then that the spiritual aspirant can ever hope to find truthful bliss and happiness.

As long as the tongue has a tendency to move 'downwards', which is metaphoric way of saying that the aspirant attracted to this gross world for he wishes to taste its delicious things and talk about its material gross things, but as soon as the aspirant develops a taste for higher values of life and wishes to taste the nectar or Amrit of eternity, bliss and beatitude got from self-realisation which is experienced when he gets acquainted with the pure consciousness that resides in his inner-self, the tongue is metaphorically said to be moving 'upwards'. While the latter tendency of the tongue is a metaphor for the aspirant's Mukti or liberation and deliverance from the gross world, the former tendency is equivalent to his remaining bound in fetters and shackled to the deluding world and its temptations.] (42/2).

42/3. [Verse nos. 42/3-42/4 describe the Yoga exercises that aid in attaining success in the Khechhari Mudra.]

The practitioner should sit in posture so that the left leg is bent inwards from the knee and its heel presses against the anus, while the right leg is stretched straight out. This right foot is then grasped by both the hands. [This is called the Mool Bandh.]

Air is first filled inside the body (i.e. Purak is done) by inhaling it through both the nostrils, and then its flow is stopped by constricting the muscles of the throat (i.e. Kumbhak is done). [This is called the Jalandhar Bandh.]

This helps to establish the vital air that is held up in the upper part of the body. [When breathing is stopped, the air inside the body remains static and trapped in the upper part of the chest. This is called the Uddiyan Bandh.]

This process helps to destroy all torments and miseries (i.e. it helps to eliminate all bodily ailments by helping to cleanse the Naadis, oxidize the tissues, revitalize them, detoxify the body, and rejuvenate the dormant energy inside it). Having successfully mastered this technique, even poison can be neutralized by the internal powers of the body. [In other words, the body becomes so strong and robust internally that it can fight infections and harmful chemicals that might gain entry in it by any means. The immune system is bolstered and the body rarely falls ill.]

Such grave diseases as tuberculosis (or the decay disease), inflammation or enlargement of glands or any other organ or tissue of the body, tumors, piles, fistulas, fissures or any other disease of the anus or rectum, as well as incurable diseases of the skin are cured by this method.

In fact, this Yoga exercise by which the practitioner is able to control the vital winds enables him to completely eliminate the fear of death. [This is achieved for two reasons—one is that the body becomes strong and cleansed of impurities, its nerves and veins are de-clogged, its vitality, vigour and energy are restored, its immune system gets a boost, it becomes strong and robust internally so much so that it can easily withstand the rough and toil of the rigours of life without falling prey to various diseases that drain the body of its strength and cause pre-mature aging. With regular and persistent practice of Yoga, the natural decay process of the body is controlled, and though the aspirant's age increases with the normal passage of time, the body still retains its younger form of his early years without showing signs of aging.]

The second reason is that self-realisation and enlightenment is a natural accompaniment or natural reward of Yoga when the practitioner realises that his body is not his 'true self', but the latter is the Atma or the pure consciousness that resides in the body. This Atma is an eternal and imperishable entity; it is sublime and subtle as opposed to the body which is gross and perishable. It is the body that dies, and not the Atma. Hence, there is no question of either fearing from death or actually dying.] (42/3).

42/4. [The next step is a modified version of the exercise described in verse no. 42/3.]

The next higher stage of controlling the vital winds and adopting the Bandhas described above in order to attain success in Khechari Mudra entails folding in of the left leg from the knee joint and pressing its heel against the testicles from below. The right leg is bent from the knee and placed on the thigh of the left leg. The vital air (breath) is filled inside the body (i.e. Kumbhak is done), the chin is pressed on the left side of the chest in the region of the heart (so that the muscles of the throat are naturally constricted and breathing restricted), and the mind is focused on contemplating upon the Atma, the pure conscious 'self' that resides in one's inner-self.

This contemplative and meditative exercise helps the spiritual aspirant to attain mystical powers that are invisible and intangible but divine and super-natural (42/4).

43. The air should first be inhaled or pulled in from the outside (i.e. Purak should be done), and then it should be held in the stomach (i.e. Kumbhak should be done).

After that, instead of exhaling this air, it should be consciously diverted to the region of the navel, the tip of the nose and the big toes of the two legs. This would need concentration of mind and great effort (43).

44/1. A practitioner of Yoga who does this exercise (described in verse no. 43) daily during the evening hours (i.e. at dusk) is freed from all diseases besides feeling relaxed and rejuvenated (44/1).

44/2. By fixing the sight (i.e. the attention of the mind) in front of the nose it is possible to control the flow of air (i.e. it is possible to control breath).

When the vital air/wind is made to remain concentrated in the center of the navel (or when the practitioner of Yoga focuses his mind in the navel and imagines that the inhaled air is circulating in the navel during the phase of Kumbhak), all the diseases are eliminated.

When this vital air/wind is consciously moved down from the navel and made to remain concentrated in the big toes of the legs (i.e. when the practitioner of Yoga uses the powers of his mind to visualize that the vital wind moves down from the navel, and instead of getting exhaled through the nose it goes to the big toes and gets localized there during the next phase of Kumbhak), the body feels very light. [This is the reason why, according to Hindu tradition, a string is tied tightly around the two toes of a man's dead body to prevent the legs from lifting from the ground. Obviously, should this ever happen it would be extremely embarrassing and awfully frightening for all those present around the dead body.] (44/2).

45. A man (who practices Yoga and) who always draws in air (virtually 'drinks or imbibes' air) through the tongue, and is able to consciously taste the nectar-like sweetness of the fresh air, is never tired, never feels exhausted or weary.

[This practice refers to an aspirant who practices Pranayam by inhaling air through the mouth instead of the normal system of inhalation done through the nose, and consciously experiences the flow of wind over the tongue, enjoying the massage that this flow gives to the nerves and tasting its refreshing pristine taste rich in rejuvenating natural gases and pure micro-elements, is able to fine-tune his body faster and more effectively than the conventional method of the normal breathing process. His tissues are rapidly oxidized and re-energized. This is because the fresh air that is drawn in through the mouth comes in contact with the wet surface of the tongue which is rich in veins and nerves. The oxygen and other re-vitalizing elements in the air are absorbed faster and directly in the blood supply of the body when they come in contact with the wet surface of the tongue that is rich in veins. Similarly, the nerves too get instant massage and feel refreshed with a surge of renewed energy.

This process of direct dissolving of rich gases into the blood stream is expressed in the terms of the tongue tasting the nectar-like taste of fresh air. It is also a metaphoric way of saying that the practitioner is able to enjoy the benefits of regulated Pranayam instantly and with vivid results. This instantaneous rejuvenation process helps the body to overcome fatigue and listlessness faster as compared to the normal process when the same oxygen and other re-vitalizing elements would get absorbed in the blood supply in a

long-drawn process after entering the body. This is why when a man has done some strenuous exercise such as lifting a heavy weight he pants with an open mouth.]

When such breathing is done regularly, the practitioner never feels hot; he does not have a burning sensation in the body. [This is also because of regular and faster ventilation of the body. Open mouth and wet tongue helps to keep the body cooled.]

All his diseases are eliminated soon. [When the body is well oxidized, when its tissues are well-detoxified, when they work in their prime condition, when the body is well ventilated, it is natural that infections and diseases would be kept at bay.] (45).

46. A Brahmin (or any wise, learned and self-disciplined man) who drinks fresh air (as described in verse no. 45) at least twice a day regularly, at dawn and at dusk, the patron Goddess of speech and knowledge makes her auspicious appearance in his speech within a period of three months. [That is, an aspirant who practices Pranayam by inhaling air through the mouth instead of the normal system of inhalation done through the nose, is able to fine-tune his faculty of speech and the organs associated with it so much so that his voice becomes sweet, he is able to coordinate his thoughts and speech so that he speaks articulately and effectively, he is able to keep the mind and intellect pruned and well organized, and is honoured and praised as a good orator and preacher.] (46).

47. If this exercise is practiced by an aspirant for a continuous period of six months, all his diseases are eliminated or at least ameliorated.

A wise and seasoned practitioner of Yoga (i.e. Pranayam) who drinks air through the tongue (i.e. who inhales air with the mouth open) and keeps it localized or focused at the root of the tongue (i.e. who practices the Jalandhar Bandh and keeps the vital winds called Pran focused in the upper part of the body, especially the region of the forehead) is able to drink or imbibe Amrit, the nectar of spiritual realisation and enlightenment (i.e. he is able to experience the bliss and ecstasy that comes with enlightenment and realisation of the consciousness in higher stages of successful Yoga).

This success bestows all-round auspiciousness to him; it provides him with welfare and stands him in good stead (47).

48. If the aspirant (i.e. the practitioner of Yoga) is able to hold the vital air that flows through the Ida Naadi (i.e. the left nostril) and concentrate it in the middle of the two eyebrows so that the mind becomes focused here—and he does this exercise regularly, then he is entitled and empowered to break through all hurdles or barriers in his spiritual pursuits. He is also entitled and empowered to partake of all the food meant for the exalted Gods¹. [Refer also to verse no. 50 herein below.]

Besides this benefit, he is able to get rid of all diseases from which he might be suffering at that time (48).

[Note—¹The food eaten is digested by the juices in the body and made available to the various organs and tissues. By carelessness and unorganized lifestyle the body's functioning becomes worn-out, its immune system takes a beating, it becomes disease-riddled, and the digestion is weakened. With Yoga these shortcomings are taken care of and the body is rejuvenated. With improved digestion the body gets better and proper nourishment. The Gods are said to reside in the different organs of the body of the man because the body is a microcosm of creation. Whatever the man ate was eaten by these Gods. These facts have been explicitly mentioned in the Aiteriya Upanishad of Rig Veda

tradition, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 3-5. Now therefore, the intention of this verse is that by doing Yoga the man's body starts working properly and all that he eats is properly digested and its nutrients duly absorbed by the tissues. This helps the Gods living inside the body in a subtle form fully satisfied, and this is depicted by the man remaining happy and cheerful as well as free from all diseases.]

49. If the aspirant (i.e. the practitioner of Yoga) inhales air through both the Naadis (i.e. through the Ida and Pingla Naadis symbolizing the left and right nostrils respectively) and keeps this air/wind localized in the two halves of the pot-like abdomen (i.e. holds the breadth in the two lobes of the lungs which occupy the two sides of the abdominal cavity) for a suitable period of time, he is freed from the shackles of all his diseases (i.e. his ailments are eliminated, and he regains his health) (49).

50. An aspirant (i.e. the practitioner of Yoga) who practices the exercise of drawing in or attracting air through the tongue and keeping it held in the abdomen three times a day (dawn, noon and dusk) for a continuous period of three months is entitled and empowered to break through all the hurdles or barriers in his spiritual pursuits. He is also entitled and empowered to partake of all the food meant for the exalted Gods. [Refer above to verse no. 48 and its accompanying note also.] (50).

51. A person who does regular Yoga by holding the vital air/wind on the tip of the nose with full concentration for a period of one Muhurta (roughly for period of one hour and forty-eight minutes) daily, all sorts of fevers from which he might be suffering are calmed down and got rid of. All sorts of poisons or toxins in the body are neutralized. Spiritually, all the sins and their negative affects that have accumulated for many generations are eliminated (51).

52. [This verse describes the various benefits got by learning to exercise restraint over the different organs of the body, both the gross organs as well as the subtle ones.]

By exercising restraint over the pupils of the eye and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to gain all types of knowledge. [This means that one must see only things worth seeing, and pay attention to details even in things that are seen in order to learn from what is seen or observed. On the other hand, if the sight is focused on wrong things one would learn things that are demeaning for the soul.]

By focusing the mind on the tip of the nose (as done during meditation as described in earlier verses of this Canto, especially in reference to Pranayam and Khechari Mudra), and visualizing the presence of consciousness there, one is able to have knowledge of the Indra Loka. [Indra is the king of Gods according to the Purans, and from the perspective of metaphysics he is the chief Pran or vital life-forces of the body that control its independent units. This is because the word 'Indra' is derived from the word 'Indri' meaning 'organs of the body'. Hence, Indra Loka refers to the comprehensive knowledge of the mundane gross world as well as the sublime subtle world.]

By focusing the mind below it and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to gain knowledge of the Agni Loka. [This refers to concentration on the point in the forehead between the two eyebrows. It is here that one experiences the radiance and splendour of consciousness shining through and lighting the inner-self of the spiritual

aspirant. The concentration of the 'Chita' or the mind and its sub-conscious during meditation and contemplation helps one to become 'enlightened and self-realised', and this is equivalent to removal of darkness of ignorance and delusions. Since darkness can only be eliminated by 'light and illumination' which are an integral part and characteristic feature of the fire, it is metaphorically said here that when one is successful in concentrating one's attention 'below the tip of the nose', i.e. at the root of the nose and at the point where it meets the two eyebrows, one is enlightened and self-realised. All his ignorance and delusions are burned in the 'fire' of knowledge.]

By focusing the mind in the eyes and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the world. [This is obvious. The implication is that the eyes are able to see and register anything seen only as long as the mind pays attention on the thing seen. If the mind is not focused on the object seen, the eyes may be looking intently at it but for all practical purposes the man would not see it and would not be aware of it. The eyes are able to see only the grosser aspect of the world, that aspect which has a form and size. Hence, this stanza has two meanings—one is that with the eyes the aspirant is able to see not only the external features of the world but also the truth behind the external façade which is often misleading, and two, that he also able to have a deep insight and develop a foresight.]

By focusing the mind on the ears and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Yam Loka. [The word 'Yam' refers to death as well as self-restraint of passions. The phrase 'Yam Loka' also refers to hell and its sufferings, as well as the world after death. Now, a man is able to hear anything only by the organ of the ear. The ears make him aware of the wailings and cries of suffering creatures, which in turn would enlighten him of the pain and agonies that are so characteristic of this mortal world. The ears help him to hear and then learn about the cause of these sufferings on the one hand, and the ways out of it on the other hand. In other words, the ears make him aware of the sufferings if one is not following the rules of Nature and allows himself to be indulgent in this mortal gross world of material sense objects on the one hand, and then it also makes him aware of what is good and what is not when he hears the teachings of the scriptures through the medium of the ears on the other hand. But all these are made possible only as long as the mind registers what the ears hear, and enables the ears to pay attention at what is being heard or said. If a man is so stupid that he does not grasp what he hears, or if he does not understand the profound meaning of the various scriptures being preached or explained to him, then he may have spent his whole lifetime hearing them but it is as good as not having heard them at all. Similarly, if a man hears the cries and wailings of all those suffering around him, but still have no awareness of the reality of this horrifying world, then he too has not heard anything.]

By focusing the mind on the side of the ears and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Raksha Loka. [The word 'Raksha' refer to the devils and demons. In other words, if a man has a natural tendency to be cunning and find pleasure in attempting to secretly hear what other people are saying, if he enjoys spying and eavesdropping unnecessarily and without any justified reason, then he is virtually hearing things not meant for him, and such deceitful and improper behaviour makes him no less than a devil in disguise. Such people are suspicious of everyone and can never be relied upon much like demons and devils. They

are backstabbers and backbiters; they create ill-will by spreading rumours and divulging things that are supposed to be kept under wraps. Words that are not meant to be heard or paid attention to by one but still registered by the mind and the sub-conscious are like words of ghosts and phantoms, and therefore the ear that hears such words are hearing demons and devils speak. In brief, this stanza teaches the spiritual aspirant not to pay attention on things not meant for him or heard by him, not to waste his energy and precious time on hearing nasty and deceitful things, or things that are not within the definition of righteousness, propriety and probity.]

By focusing the mind on the back of the body and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Varun Loka. [Varun is the patron God of water. This stanza refers to the positioning of the kidneys which lie in the posterior side of the lower abdomen. This stanza refers to the awareness in a man which sub-consciously tell him when the urinary bladder is full and needs to be emptied.]

By focusing the mind in the left ear and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Vayu Loka. [Sound travels through the medium of air. So, this statement refers to the fact that if the mind is attentive enough it can hear anything that is said or any sound that is made even at a long distance as the air would carry it to his ear. Special reference to the left ear may also refer to the leftist social principles of which a man is aware. It implies that he is concerned about the welfare of all in the society and not self-centered and selfish. Besides this, it is pertinent to note here that inhaling vital air first through the 'left' nostril or the Ida Naadi while doing Pranayam is stressed in Yoga. Hence, the reference to the 'left' ear also means that the aspirant begins to hear the roar of the cosmic wind blowing in the distant horizon when he is in deep contemplative state of Yoga.]

By focusing the mind in the throat and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Chandra Loka. [The word 'Chandra' means the moon. The reference here is to the Jalandhar Bandh when the aperture of the throat is closed during Yoga and the Pran or the vital winds move through the Ida Naadi, which is also called the 'Chandra Naadi', to reach the Agya Chakra located in the forehead between the eyebrows where the ascetic experiences extreme ecstasy and bliss that comes with awareness of the pure and sublime consciousness that resides in the body itself. This is equivalent to his tasting the nectar of bliss that drops from his head into the throat during this stage of Yoga. This nectar is called Amrit and it is stored in the moon which is regarded as the heavenly pitcher of Amrit, the elixir of eternal and undiluted bliss and happiness that the Gods drink. Hence, this stanza refers to the experiencing of extreme bliss and ecstasy of spiritual realisation when one is successful in meditation and contemplation. It also might refer to the fact that the ascetic's words become full of wisdom and erudition besides being sweet and pleasant to hear as symbolized by the presence of Goddess Saraswati on his tongue as referred to in verse no. 46 above in this section no. 7 of the present Canto 1.]

By focusing the mind on the left eyes and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Shiva Loka. [Lord Shiva is the God who brings about the conclusion of creation. The term 'left' refers to one being adversely inclined towards anything, or not being favourable to any given thing or event. It is only when the mind is not in favour of anything or situation that the man would think of eliminating it or concluding it. Since Lord Shiva is the patron deity of conclusion of

the world, the symbolism is clear—that if the mind is not favourable to anything, or when one does not see anything favourably, he would be inclined to eliminate it by shunning it completely. When the mind does not register anything, it is as good as being concluded as far as the creature is concerned in spite of its presence and the creature actually looking at it.]

By focusing the mind on the head and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Brahm Loka. [This has reference to the area of the head where the brain is located. The brain is the only entity in the body that thinks and has intelligence; hence it is a symbolic abode of the Supreme Being. The Aiteriya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 3, verse no. 12 describes how Brahm, the Supreme Being, had entered the body of the man at the time of creation by entering it through a hair-like slit on the skull, which came to be known as the Brahm-Randhra. Yoga Upanishads describe how the Pran of the ascetic experiences the presence of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, when it enters the region of the head above the root of the nose. It is then that the practitioner of Yoga becomes self-realised and enlightened. When the time comes, the Pran escapes through this Brahm-Randhra into the outer sky, thereby providing the man with his final liberation and deliverance, called his Mukti. Hence, this stanza refers to Brahm-realisation, or experiencing the presence of cosmic Consciousness leading to enlightenment and self-awareness when the mind is focused on doing Yoga in its heightened and most refined form.]

By focusing the mind on the sole of the foot and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Atal Loka. [The genesis of creation describes that the lower worlds were created from the feet of the Viraat Purush who is the all-encompassing macrocosmic form of the Supreme Being. This stanza refers to this fact because the human body is a microcosm of the same Viraat Purush. In more practical terms it means that one feels the ground below one's feet only because the mind enables the soles to be aware of its presence, or only as long as there is conscious life in the soles. When the mind is diverted somewhere else one would not be aware of the ground on which one walks.]

By focusing the mind on the toes of the leg and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Vital Loka. [The Vital Loka is an extension or projection of the Atal Loka, and is a part of the seven types of lower worlds. The toes are like the feelers of the leg which resemble the shortened tentacles of an insect by the help of which it gets the hang of things in its front. The idea here is that even though the soles of the feet might have life in them that enables a man to feel the ground under his feet, but the toes might be paralyzed and unable to feel any sensation at all, as happens during frost bite. In short, the idea is that each unit of the man's body is kept alive and functioning only as long as the mind and its sub-conscious decides it to be so. Otherwise that particular organ is as good as dead. From the metaphysical perspective it means that the creature's body or any of its organs is worth its while only as long as there is life-consciousness in it.]

By focusing the mind on the ankle-joints and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Nital Loka. [This is the third of the seven lower worlds.]

By focusing the mind on the calf and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Satal Loka. [This is the fourth of the seven lower worlds.]

By focusing the mind on the knee-joint and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Mahaatal Loka. [This is the fifth of the seven lower worlds.]

By focusing the mind on the thighs and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Rasaatal Loka. [This is the sixth of the seven lower worlds.]

By focusing the mind on the hip-joint and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Talaatal Loka. [This is the seventh and the last of the lower worlds.]

By focusing the mind on the navel and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Bhu Loka. [This is the terrestrial world. The 'Bhu Loka' is the first of the seven upper worlds. The probable reason to say that by focusing the attention on the navel one is able to have knowledge of the Bhu Loka is that it is through the navel that the man's body derives its nourishment when it is in the mother's womb, and the navel is said to be the center from where all the Naadis (nerves and veins) originate and then radiate to all the parts of the body. These Naadis make a man aware of the world around him and enables him to live in it. All the internal gross organs of the body, such as the intestines, the kidneys, the pancreas, the genitals, the liver, the heart, the lungs etc. are also located in the area of the body of which the navel is the epicenter. Hence, the navel is the part of the body that makes a man aware of the terrestrial world around him.]

By focusing the mind on the stomach or the cavity of the abdomen and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Bhuvaha Loka. [The 'Bhuvaha Loka' is the second of the seven upper worlds. This is the world above the earth and is the lower heaven. It is here that the sky has its beginning above the surface of the earth. The cavity of the stomach and the abdomen are like this sky because they are nearer to the navel which represents the terrestrial world or the surface of the earth.]

By focusing the mind on the heart and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Swaha Loka. [The 'Swaha Loka' is the third of the seven upper worlds. This is the middle heaven where the junior Gods live. The heart is emotional and is easily taken for a ride. It rarely thinks of spiritual matters though it is here in its subtle sky that the 'spirit' lives in the form of the Atma of the man. The Gods that live in the heaven are also noble 'spirits' who have not found total emancipation and salvation because had they achieved this ultimate destination they would not have existed as 'Gods' in the first place. These Gods are also emotional and have their own passions, longings, preferences and biases like the heart of the man. Just like success in any venture in this material world is said to be quite dependant upon the help provided by these Gods, the involvement of the heart is absolutely necessary if one needs to be totally focused on the task at hand. Otherwise he would be doing it 'half-heartedly'. The involvement of the heart in the process of learning is also evident when we say that the subject is to be learnt 'by heart', though technically it is the brain that actually does the learning job.]

By focusing the mind on the upper area of the body above the heart and below the throat, and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Maha Loka. [The 'Maha Loka' is the fourth of the seven upper worlds. The word 'Maha' means 'great or greater' like we have 'Greater London'. It is an extension of the Swaha represented by the heart. The probable reason of equating the upper area of the chest above the heart to this 'Maha Loka' is that the broader face of the cone-like heart faces up while its tapering end is pointing downwards.]

By focusing the mind in the Kantha or the throat region and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Janaha Loka. [The 'Janaha Loka' is the fifth of the seven upper worlds. It refers to the area of the world which is inhabited by creatures who speak, as the voice is located in the throat. A man is made conscious of the presence of life in any part of the world only when he hears about it, or when it is spoken about. Similarly, one makes companions and expands his reach in this world by using the faculty of speech to make his views and intentions known. Hence, it is appropriate to call the throat as being the medium by which one becomes aware of the Janaha Loka, and gains knowledge of it.]

By focusing the mind in the middle of the two eyebrows in the forehead and visualizing the presence of consciousness there one is able to have knowledge of the Tapaha Loka. [The 'Tapaha Loka' is the sixth of the seven upper worlds. The word 'Tapa' refers to observing stringent austerity, doing penance and suffering hardships for some noble cause. Meditation and contemplation envisages strict control over the numerous dalliances of the body and its natural desire for seeking gratification as well as pleasures and comforts of the material world. To do Yoga, especially the one of higher spiritual dimension as described in this Canto which involves concentration of mind in the forehead between the two eyebrows so that spiritual awakening is made feasible and one can experience the presence of the consciousness there (refer verse nos. 17-23, 33, 48), is equivalent to doing Tapa as it requires strict discipline and self-control. Those spiritual aspirants who do Yoga are actually doing Tapa for their spiritual liberation and deliverance.]

By focusing the mind in the head (i.e. the upper area of the head where the Sahastraar Chakra and the Brahm-Randhra are located, and where Brahm is said to have his divine abode in the man's body), and visualizing the presence of consciousness there, one is able to have knowledge of the Satya Loka. [The 'Satya Loka' is the seventh and the last of the upper worlds. It is called 'Satya' meaning 'truthful' because it is here that the ascetic comes face to face with the cosmic 'Truth' in the form of Brahm. More practically it refers to the brain with its intellect and the faculty of thought with its magnificent ability to separate the wrong from the right, to distinguish between what is false and what is true, to show the creature the right and auspicious path to his welfare and good. It is the higher level of the intellect that distinguishes a man from an animal, and an evil and sinful man from a noble and holy one. No other organ, singularly or in conjunction with others has this ability. So, since intelligence and consciousness go hand in hand, and since the Supreme Being is the most wise and intelligent entity in creation, the head is regarded as the abode of Brahm. The mind and intellect drive all the activities of the man, and are regarded as the 'captain' or the 'chief commander' of the entire setup known as the body of the man just like the Supreme Being is the chief commander of the vast creation. From the metaphysical perspective, when the aspirant realises the presence

of this cosmic divinity in the form of pure consciousness residing in his inner-self along with the understanding that his 'real self' is this sublime consciousness that is eternal and imperishable, and not the gross body in which this consciousness lives, as also the fact that both the body as well as the rest of the world are gross, perishable and therefore false and deluding, he is deemed to have realised the spiritual 'truth' of existence. When this happens it is metaphorically said that he has had knowledge of the 'Satya Loka' or the truthful nature existence.]

By focusing the mind on what is Dharma and what is Adharma (i.e. when the mind is able to distinguish what is right and proper, and what is not), the man is able to know of the past and the future. [When he analyses his present situation, good or bad, and researches on the factors which result in creating a similar situation, he can intelligently trace back to his past to visualize what he must have done sometimes long ago due to the effect of which he is in a particular situation today. This would also help him to predict his future as every action has a predictable result, and thereby help him devise methods to improve his future based on his present experience and its analysis. This has a solid scientific backing when one can confidently deduce the past as well as precisely predict the future course of events if one knows the present and has the statistical data as well as the knowledge of the various equations and reactions necessary for such deductions. In the metaphysical realm, the scriptures provide the information on what actions produce what results. This is the meaning of 'Dharma and Adharma' here. While 'Dharma' refers to things that are auspicious, proper and righteous, Adharma means just the opposite. When a man is wise he would study the scriptures and would immediately come to know which right or wrong action or deed of his in the past has landed him in his present situation, and what he must do now to determine the future he wishes for himself. Hence, the meaning of this stanza becomes abundantly clear and obvious to him now.]

When the man's mind is focused on and pays attention on the voices of different creatures, he is not only able to know what they are saying but also learns different languages, accents and dialects. [This stanza also means that when one closely listens to what others are saying he is able to have an in-depth knowledge of things yet not known to him as well as understand the hidden meaning of what is being said.]

When a man is able to focus his mind and pay attention to the theory of deeds and their consequences, and how they affect a man's destiny and future, he is able to learn about his past life. [When a wise person gains knowledge of how various deeds and their cumulative results affect a person's present life, he can look back and confidently deduce about his past life based on the present situation of his life. For instance, if he learns that a particular disease is caused by overeating or indulging in something and finds that he is suffering from the same disease, he can very safely deduce that he had been committing the same mistake in some time in the past. And, he also becomes wizened to the fact that even if he is healthy now but commits the same mistake that produces a particular disease then he is sure to suffer from it in the future. In other word, a wise and erudite man can determine with logical and statistical certainty what his future and destiny would be depending upon what his deeds are, or what his past life was based on his present.]

By thinking the way others think, a wise and erudite man is able to know and analyse their thought processes, and even predict their behaviours based on this analysis.

By fixing the mind on the physical characteristics of others, a man begins to imitate them. [For instance, if a man thinks that wearing a particular set of clothes would

make him look smarter, he would start wearing them himself. If he thinks that walking in a specific manner with a particular swagger would make him appear cool and modern, he would adopt it. The simple implication in all these stanzas is that a man becomes what he thinks of, where his mind is focused.]

By fixing the mind on acquisition of strength, a man acquires bodily strength and physical prowess like the one possessed by Hanuman and other strong beings. [Hanuman is a character from the legendary story of Ramayana. He was instrumental in Lord Ram's search for Sita and the victory of the demon Ravana. Hanuman is regarded as singularly one of the most brave and strong companions of Lord Ram. This happens because when the mind is focused on physical strength and fitness, it would strive to make the man do everything to make the body strong and fit. Like any other decision of the man when it is the mind that decides what he does and what he shuns, it is the mind that is instrumental in his attaining strength and physical fitness.]

By focusing the mind on the Sun, a man acquires knowledge of all the Bhuvans (worlds) that are lighted by the Sun. [This is a metaphoric way of saying that if a man looks up and gets interested in astrology and astronomy he will be able to learn about the higher worlds above the earth, about the solar system and other celestial bodies in the heaven. The Sun lights up the entire sky, and not only the earth. Hence, he would gain knowledge of the worlds and subtle forms of life beyond the earth.]

Similarly, if his mind is focused on the Moon, he would acquire knowledge of the stars and other heavenly bodies of the sky during the night.

By focusing the mind on the Dhruv star (the Polar Star), a man is able to learn about the movement of stars and other planetary bodies in the sky. [This technique was used in earlier times to navigate during the night. The locations and movements of the different constellations in the sky are deduced with relation to the Polar Star.]

When the mind is focused in one's own welfare he is able to find out the truth that serves his purpose. [From the metaphysical angle this is very important observation. When a man wishes to find out what is really good for him, he discovers the truth of the Atma and the real path to his spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. He also discovers that the world which he finds so real and pleasurable is actually playing spoil-sport as far as his true spiritual welfare is concerned as the world would keep him trapped in its endless net of delusions and temptations. By remaining enamoured by this cunning enchantress, the man can never find true peace and happiness. The knowledge of this 'truth' is what really serves his self interest, and this knowledge like any body of knowledge comes only when the mind is focused and alert.]

By focusing the mind on the Nabhi Chakra (i.e. the whirling subtle energy center located in the region of the navel), one is able to have knowledge of the construction of the physical body. [This is because the embryo derives its nourishment from the mother through the placenta attached to the navel. All the Naadis have their origin in the Nabhi Chakra. It is the de-facto center of the physical body as all the major organs, both internal as well as external, are located in the region of the abdomen around the navel. If the abdomen is removed, nothing would remain of the body.]

By focusing the mind on the pit of the throat, thirst and hunger are controlled. [This refers to the process of Pranayam and its accompanying benefits as described earlier in verse nos. 13/3-4 of this section no. 7, Canto no. 1. It also refers to the Khechari Mudra and the Jalandhar Bandh as described in verse nos. 11,30, 42/2-3.]

By focusing the mind on the Kurma Naadi, one obtains stability and restfulness. [Refer Canto 1, section 4, verse no. 13 which describes the functions of different Naadis. The Kurma Naadi is responsible for the opening and closing of the eyelids. The obvious inference here is that when one is able to control his eyes he would be able to control what he sees of the world, and thereby control his awareness of the world itself. Besides this, it is required in the Khechari Mudra of Yoga that one keeps his eyes fixed without blinking on the tip of his nose as well as remain mentally focused on the central point of the eyebrows. The practitioner is supposed to keep his eyes in a half-open and half-closed position in order to attain higher echelons of spiritual bliss—first it is done consciously as a special effort, and in due course it becomes natural to him. Refer above to verse nos. 15-18, 32-34, 44/2 of this section no. 7.]

By focusing the mind on the pupils of the eye, one is able to attain mystical powers. [Refer verse no. 17 of this section 7, Canto 1.]

And finally, by focusing the mind in the subtle sky or subtle space present inside the body, a man is able to move in the greater sky of the creation. [This refers to the process of controlling of the vital winds through Pranayam and diverting the energy of the Kundalini upwards, as well as to the Khechari Mudra that is described in detail in this section above. Refer specially to verse nos. 39, 42/2.]

In this way, by focusing the mind and visualizing the presence of consciousness in various units of the body, the aspirant is able to have different experiences of the same divinity in different forms with different dimensions. He obtains access to various mystical experiences by focusing the mind on different levels of existence (52).

[Note—Refer to last stanza of verse no. 1 and full verse no. 2 of section 8, Canto 1 of this Upanishad below in the context of the present verse no. 52.]

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Canto 1/Section 8

1. Now the concept of 'Pratyahar' is being described. It is of five types as follows—

Generally speaking, Pratyahar is to exercise restraint on the sense organs of the gross body by preventing them from naturally moving outwards towards their respective sense objects in the external world and remaining indulgent or engrossed in them. Pratyahar is to consciously and diligently strive to turn the efforts and energy of the sense organs of the body inwards towards one's inner being, towards one's truthful 'self', towards realisation of the truth of the Atma, the pure conscious Spirit, by being meditative and contemplative in a purposeful and fruitful manner.

In order to make this happen, the aspirant should understand and inculcate the wisdom that whatever is seen is nothing but the Atma or pure consciousness, and that if anything lacks the Atma then it is not the truth. The awareness that whatever is perceived in the external world by the organs of perception in the body is due to the presence of Atma or consciousness or 'life' in these organs, and that this world exists only as long as there is Atma in it (i.e. as long as there is life in the body as well as the world in which it lives) is known as Pratyahar.

Not to be interested in and bothered or concerned about the results of the deeds done daily by the aspirant is known as Pratyahar. [In other words, one is observing Pratyahar if he is not worried about the rewards or punishments of the deeds that he does

as a matter of his duty. He should do deeds in this world without expecting any fruits from them. This is doing deeds with exemplary detachment and dispassion. Since all deeds are done by the gross organs of the body, being detached from the deeds, or not being mentally involved in them, is equivalent to having restrained the organs from involvement with the external world of sense objects because these organs would not expect any self-gratification or deriving any personal gain as a reward of doing these deeds. Neither would the organs shun doing any deed for the fear of punishment. The net effect would be that the man would do all his duties with the greatest neutrality and in an un-biased way. He would be more interested in doing his duties diligently and to the best of his might and abilities so that the thing done is perfect as far as possible rather than having half his attention fixed on their results, and getting nervous and distracted as a consequence.]

To be completely free from all sorts of Vasanas (passions, lust, desires, aspirations and yearnings) regarding the various material sense objects of this mundane world is also called Pratyahar. [Vasanas are generated when the sense organs find the world succulent and juicy. When the man trains himself to become dispassionate and detached from all temptations and enchantments of this deluding and entrapping world, it is natural that the organs lose interest in the world. It is the mind that directs the organs of the body to do anything, and when the mind has decided that it is worthless to pursue this material world, and that no permanent peace, bliss and happiness is ever possible in this world and its material sense objects, it would direct the organs to keep themselves away from all involvement with this world.]

To focus the mind and its sub-conscious in the eighteen subtle places of the body so that the energy and dynamism inherent in the living being are directed to nobler causes of the spirit instead of frittering them away in pursuing this illusive and demeaning gross world is also known as Pratyahar. [The eighteen subtle points are listed in verse no. 2 below. This edict is an extension of the first one that ordains restricting the sense organs of the body from moving outwards towards the gross world of material sense objects, and instead turning those organs inwards and directing their efforts to aid the aspirant in his spiritual practices such as meditation and contemplation.] (1).

2. The eighteen points where the mind should be focused and consciousness visualized to be pulsating (i.e. present in a vibrating form) during meditation are the following—the big toe of the foot, the ankle, the calf, the knee, the thigh, the anus, the genital, the navel, the heart, the pit of the throat, the palate in the mouth, the nostril, the eye, the center of the eyebrows, the forehead, and the top of the head.

One must concentrate on all these points of the body and experience the pulsations of life-consciousness in them. [In this context, refer verse no. 52, section 7, Canto 1 above of this present Upanishad.] (2).

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Canto 1/Section 9

1. Now, the concept of 'Dharna' (to bear; to have a firmness of conviction and belief) is being narrated. It is of three types as follows--

To focus one's Mana (thinking mind and emotional heart) on the Atma or the pure consciousness that is the true inner-self of the aspirant, and to be unwaveringly firm in this belief that the Atma is one's true self, is called the first type of Dharna.

To have a firm belief and be convinced that the subtle space of the heart, called the 'Hridaya Akash', is the same as the eternal, vast, infinite and fathomless sky present outside the body, called the 'Vahaya-kash', is the second type of Dharna.

To be convinced that the five principal elements of creation, viz. the earth, the water, the fire, the air and the sky which, though subtle in themselves, are the ones that have revealed themselves in the gross form of all that exists in this creation is called 'Dharna'. In other words, to be able to have a firm belief that all that is visible in this gross world are nothing else but the same five subtle elements of creation appearing in these myriad and varied forms is called Dharna. Hence, Dharna is to have a firm conviction that all that is visible in this world are actually images of these five primary elements of creation that have assumed different forms. [By extension, Dharna is to have a firm belief that all life and all creatures that exist in this world are nothing but the same cosmic Consciousness called the Atma that is revealed in each of their forms.] (1).

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Canto 1/Section 10

1. Now, the concept of 'Dhyan'¹ is being described. It is of two types as follows—

The first is called 'Saguna Dhyan' and the second is called 'Nirguna Dhyan'.

'Saguna Dhyan' is to think about, contemplate upon and remember something as having a physical form with specific features; it is to think of the divine Being in the form of an image having gross physical features and characteristic attributes.

'Nirguna Dhyan' is to think of and contemplate upon the same sublime divinity in its subtle form that is invisible and is known as the Atma or pure consciousness. This Atma is in the form of an ethereal spirit that has no grossness, physical features or characteristic attributes to define it (1).

[Note—¹*Dhyan*— The word *Dhyan* literally means 'to think or to cogitate'. It is profound and abstract meditation that revolves around reflection and thoughts that are focused on the Divinity said to be concealed inside the bosom of all the creatures as their pure consciousness that in turn is the supreme cosmic power in creation known as Brahm. Usually the energy of this cosmic Consciousness is lying latent and unused in the own body of the creature simply because it is in a dormant form and un-ignited much like the fire lying dormant in the firewood or charcoal and needing some prodding to leap back into life with all its glorious potentials and splendour. Dhyan envisages the concentration of the stupendous powers of the faculties of the mind to deeply contemplate and fixedly ponder on the great spiritual truths of creation as envisioned by the scriptures to unravel their enigmatic secrets. This is done by fixing the powerful forces of the mind which is aided by the physical contribution of the body in this auspicious endeavour in the form of various meditative exercises, onto a spot called the 'Bindu', literally the point source of spiritual energy located in the heart as the 'Atma or soul' of the creature, as also in the centre of the eyebrows as 'awareness and enlightenment', from where the great mystical powers in creation spring out and spread into the outside world. It envisions the use of various Yoga techniques to contemplate and meditate upon the various aspects of spiritualism with the objective of unfolding the magnificent treasure of spiritual

enlightenment and unleashing of the astounding mystical powers that are inherently present in the Atma but tacitly concealed hitherto, leading to self and Brahm realisation, to the awakening of the universal powers of the Spirit.

Dhyan means both contemplation as well as meditation. The word also means 'attention; focus'. So this word is generally understood in common parlance to be similar to contemplation and meditation, concentration and focusing of the conscious mind. It covers both the terms in its ambit.

The appropriate word for contemplation in Sanskrit would be 'Manan and Chintan' which will roughly mean 'deep thought, reflection, pondering and application of mind'. The Upanishads stress on this 'Chintan-manan' aspect of the mind-intellect when it talks about 'Dhyan'. Greatest of scientific discoveries were made more by intuition than anything else. That is why intuition is closely related to the so-called 'sixth sense' in a man, i.e. a state when the intuitive man knows what is the correct path to chose from a variety of options, and more often than not, he is correct. We can say that this 'intuition' is the guidance provided by the subtle soul/Atma of the creature. Not everybody is equally intuitive by nature; this is because some persons, by virtue of their past actions and deeds have a thicker layer of Vasanas and Vrittis surrounding their Atma while others have a thinner layer so that the voice coming out of the Atma is easily heard in the latter case while it is muzzled and suppressed in the former case.

The great exponent of Yoga, sage Patanjali, in his magnum opus 'Yogsutra' has described 'Dhyan' as concentration. Dhyan is that state in which the inner mind tries to see the reality behind things. This 'thinking' process links it with contemplation while concentration function links it with meditation. According to Agni Puran, contemplation with a calm mind is Dhyan while Garud Puran has defined it as concentration on the Brahm. Dhyan, therefore, leads to enlightenment. Woodworth, in his book 'Psychology', writes that the mind concentrates on one impulse at a time and neglects others. So, Dhyan in this context means 'to become alert and activated for doing a work or seeing an object exclusively'. Dhyan is momentary in the beginning, but it becomes permanent later on with practice. Sidney Smith defines Dhyan as 'to forget everything else except the main objective'. Charles Dickens views Dhyan as 'useful, harmless, definite and a beneficial process of the mind'. According to Bergansa, 'suppression of external distractions is essential for the deepening expansion of Dhyan'. Edgar Casey says that 'Dhyan brings to the fore the latent powers of creativity in a person. This creativity improves and enriches his physical, mental and spiritual aspects'. John White in his renowned work 'The meeting of science and spirit' has enumerated many benefits of Dhyan— promotion of physical health, reduction of tension, anxiety and aggressiveness, it leads to self realisation and self improvement and development. He further says that the benefit of meditation are the following— feeling of tranquillity, freedom, reduction of tiredness and depression, relief from pains, increase in positive traits such as sympathy and empathy for others, believe in divinity and purity of self etc. Michael Murphy and Steven Donovan, in their research work titled 'The physical and psychological effects of meditation' have mentioned that meditation/Dhyan helps to regulate and control electrical and chemical activity of the brain, the rhythm of the heart, regulates blood pressure, the skin's ability to resist infection and it regulates general metabolism.

The great philosopher sage Sankaracharya has explained that the many Vedic rituals such as sacrifices had been transformed as mental concepts for contemplation and meditation by Chandogya Upanishad because any defect in the performance of a ritual according to the Vedas, however small and inconsequential, could devalue and derail the whole process. Further, elaborate rituals required huge preparation and expenditure. So he prescribed that meditation was far better, safer and surer means of attaining the same benefits that elaborate sacrifices offered. Contemplation and mediation are equally

efficient in spiritual pursuit of the aspirant. Nevertheless, the former (contemplation) has intellect and mind as its main focus while the latter (meditation) concentrates on the mind and body to be effective. Sacrifices, as compared to them, are merely physical rituals.

As is evident, the chariot moves in the proper direction when all the horses are controlled simultaneously. So a holistic and an all-inclusive, well synchronized and homogenous approach is needed by a seeker/aspirant to attain success in his endeavour to get liberation and deliverance from the horrible torments agitating him as well as to attain emancipation and salvation for its soul from this world.

The concept of Dhyān has been described in detail in *Chandogya Upanishad*, Canto 7, section 6 and 18 of the Sam Veda tradition, and *Dhyān Bindu Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which is expressly dedicated to it. Verse no. 1 of Dhyān Bindu Upanishad refers to the concept of Dhyān Yoga and gives its spiritual importance. The *Naradparivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 7, verse no. 8 says that the Hans and the Param Hans Sanyasis are required to do only Dhyān as a means to obtain Mukti or spiritual salvation. Refer also to the *Tejobindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 36.]

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Canto 1/Section 11

1. Now finally, the concept of 'Samadhi' is being narrated in brief.

It is a state of exalted and sublime existence when the Jiva-Atma and the Parmatma have become one—i.e. when the individual soul has become indistinguishable, inseparable and indivisible from the cosmic Soul of creation.

It is an exalted and sublime state when there is no distinction between the three basic units of creation that makes one aware of its existence—viz. the one who is the observer or seer of anything, the thing observed or seen, and the medium used in the process of observing or seeing. [For instance, when a man sees an object such as mountain, he is the seer, the mountain is the object seen, and the eye and its faculty of sight is the medium used in this process. Similarly, when a man hears some music, he is the one who hears, the music is the object heard, and the ears are the medium to complete the circuit or make hearing possible. During Samadhi all these three merge into one point—the spiritual aspirant reaches a state when all barriers between his individual self and the cosmic Self are removed and his Atma becomes one with the cosmic Atma that is all-pervading in this creation. The gross body which separates them is relegated to the background and rendered inconsequential; the Atma transcends the grossness of the body and assumes its primary cosmic form which is all-pervading and free from all encumbrances. It is like the air trapped in a mud-pot merging with the outer air when the pot is broken. Hence, Samadhi is a transcendental state of dissolution when all artificial distinctions and illusionary boundaries are done away with.]

Samadhi is marked by a state of extreme blissfulness, felicity and beatitude when all that remains and matters is the pure and sublime consciousness (1).

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Canto 2/Section 1

[This and the following Cantos are an exposition of the concept of ‘Brahm Vidya’—or the sublime knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm.]

1. When sage Shandilya had studied all the four Vedas but still could not grasp the Brahm Vidya¹, i.e. inspite of delving deep into the four primary scriptures he could not understand what Brahm stood for and what is its form and nature, he approached the most exalted sage Atharva and requested him—‘Oh Lord! Please preach me on Brahm Vidya (i.e. enlighten me about the concept of Brahm) so that I can have spiritual welfare and derive benefit from it.’ (1).

[Note—¹*Brahm Vidya*—All the Upanishads are basically dedicated to this eclectic philosophy. It is called ‘Brahm-realisation’ and it marks the culmination of one’s spiritual quest. However, besides the present Upanishad, some of the other Upanishads which can be cited here are the following—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Kaivalya Upanishad, Brahm Upanishad, Panch Brahm Upanishad, Akchyu Upanishad, Tejobindu Upanishad, Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 1-5, and Brahm Vidya Upanishad. (b) Atharva Veda’s Mundak Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 1, section 1; Mundak (Canto) 2, section 1; Mundak (Canto) 3, section 1-2; Atma Upanishad; Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph no. 4; Canto 4, paragraph no. 1. (c) Sam Veda’s Chandogya Upanishad. (d) Shukla Yajur Veda’s Brihad Aranyak Upanishad.]

2. Upon this request, sage Atharva began his discourse—‘Oh Shandilya! Brahm¹ (the supreme transcendental and divine Being; the super Consciousness; the principal Authority and the Supreme Being of creation; the absolute and the only truth of creation) exists or is revealed not only in the form of ‘Satya’ (Truth) and ‘Vigyan’ (truthful and in-depth knowledge) but also in the form that is ‘Anant’ (endless, infinite) as well as other forms. [There is another way of reading this verse as follows—Brahm has endless and infinite forms, and one of them is Truth, and the other is Knowledge.] (2).

[Note—¹Brahm is a most enigmatic, esoteric and mysterious entity of creation, an entity that is the object of all metaphysical research and discussions. All the Upanishads as well as the primary scriptures known as the Vedas are primarily focused on Brahm and attempt to understand it, but the fact is that they all fail in this attempt. All they say at the end is ‘neti-neti’—i.e. Brahm is neither this nor that; ‘Brahm is not this, it is definitely not this’, they declare.

There are legends of Upanishads that do not tire in enumerating the grandness and the majesty of Brahm and its divine and unparalleled virtues. Some of these Upanishads are the following, though it cannot be concluded that this is a complete list because all the 108 Upanishads deal with this single divine entity—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda’s *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 15-19, Canto 3, verse nos. 17-22; *Kathrudra Upanishad*, verse no. 12, 27-28, 30-31, 42; *Taittiriya Upanishad* Valli 3, Anuvak 10, verse no. 2-5; *Skanda Upanishad*, verse no. 13; *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad*, verse no. 4; *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 16, 20-21, 26, 29; Canto 3, verse no. 2; and Canto 4, verse nos. 31-32; *Yog Kundalini Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 35; *Saraswati Upanishad*, verse no. 50-52; *Shwetashwatar Upanishad*.

(b) Atharva Veda’s = *Mundak Upanishad*, Mundak 1, section 1, verse no. 6; Mundak 2, section 2, verse no. 7, 9-11; Mundak 3, section 1, verse no. 3-5, 7-9; *Atharvashir Upanishad*, Kandika 4 (full); *Naradparivrajak Upanishad*, Canto 8 which is fully dedicated to enumerating the grand virtues of Brahm; Canto 9, verse nos. 3, 19-22;

Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph 4, Canto 4, paragraph no. 1; *Shandilya Upanishad*, Canto 2, section 1, verse nos. 2-5, and Canto 3, section 1, verse nos. 1-8, 11-14; *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 27-31, 67; Canto 5, verse nos. 10, 20-21, 65-67; Canto 5, verse nos. 72-73, 76-77, 113; *Atma Upanishad*, verse nos. 1-D and 1-E, verse nos. 2-4, 9, 30-31; *Pashupata Brahm Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 11, 13-16; Canto 2, verse nos. 13-16, 26, 28-30, 44; *Tripura Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 6, 8-9, 16-17, 22; *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 7.

(c) Shukla Yajur Veda's following Upanishads—*Adhyatma Upanishad*, verse nos. 61-64; *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad* Canto 2, Brahman 3 describes this Brahm's two forms in detail.

(d) Sam Veda's *Chandogya Upanishad*, *Keno Upanishad* and *Avyakta Upanishad*.]

3. Brahm is an indefinable and incomprehensible divine but most esoteric and mysterious entity that surrounds everything in existence, in which everything is submerged. It is from this divine entity that everything comes into being, and it is in it that everything would finally collapse and end.

It is one by knowing which everything else becomes known.

It has no hands and legs, no eyes, does nothing, has no tongue, and neither does it have any form of physical gross body.

It is an entity so subtle and ethereal as well as mysterious, enigmatic and esoteric that it cannot be grasped, physically (because it has no gross body and form) as well as metaphorically (because he defies all understanding and transcends definitions).

Hence, it (Brahm) cannot be described or explained in any way whatsoever. [Any attempt to do so is only scrapping the surface without even being able to peel the first layer fully.] (3).

4. The speech and the mind return empty-handed in their failed attempt to have access to it (Brahm). [That is, the faculty of speech fails miserably in its attempt to describe Brahm, and the mind too fails equally miserably in its attempt to know or understand about Brahm.]

That (Brahm) which can only be known by the medium of true Gyan (enlightenment and self-realisation), that from which ancient wisdom and knowledge first came into being and then developed and spread, that which is unique, unparalleled and non-dual, that which is all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent like the sky, that which is most subtle and sublime, that which is honoured by the epithet of 'Niranjan' (i.e. one that is without any blemishes and taints of any kind; one that is faultless and free from darkness), that which does not do anything or gets involved in any kind of deeds or actions on the physical plane of existence (though nothing happens without it or its inspiration), that which is the only and ultimate Truth and Reality in the entire creation, that which is an embodiment of pure and dynamic consciousness, that which is an image of extreme bliss, happiness, beatitude and felicity, that which is only one, immutable and indivisible, remaining ever steady and unchanging, that which is auspicious, holy, sublime and divine, that which is extremely calm, peaceful, serene and tranquil, being unruffled and unaffected by anything, that which is eternal and imperishable—verily, it is this unique divinity that is known as the supreme transcendental Brahm.

Indeed it is you (Shandilya). Come to realise it (the truth about yourself as well as about Brahm) through acquisition of Gyan. [The 'true self' of all living beings is their

Atma, the pure, subtle and sublime consciousness residing in their gross physical body. Brahm is also the same 'consciousness' but on a grand scale of the entire creation. The individual creature is Brahm in its microcosmic form. It must be emphasized here that when we talk of the individual creature we mean his 'Atma' and not the gross body. Hence, it is obvious that statement 'it is you' refers to the Atma, the 'true self' of sage Shandilya, and not his gross body. The gross body is erroneously regarded as the identity of the creature because of the simple reason that it is visible and easy to understand, while the Atma is invisible and non-tangible entity difficult to perceive and understand. Once this truth—that the 'true self' is the Atma, and that the Atma is a universal entity that uniformly pervades throughout this world—dawns upon the mental horizon of the aspirant, he becomes 'self-realised'. And since the 'self' is the pure conscious Atma, it follows that when one becomes 'self-realised' he is deemed to be 'Brahm-realised' too.

The statement 'you are Brahm' which leads to the realisation 'I am Brahm' are one of the few Mahavakyas, or the great spiritual truths, proclaimed by the Vedas.] (4).

5. It is one supreme Lord whose dynamic Shakti (spiritual energy) has been revealed in the form of the powers of the Atma.

He is all-knowing and omniscient in all matters.

He is the Lord of all that exists.

He is manifested as the Atma living in the inner-self of all living beings, and therefore he is a secret resident in the inner-self of all the creatures in this creation.

He is the origin of all living beings (as he is the supreme and ultimate Creator who has created even the Trinity Gods consisting of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva).

He can only be known by Yoga (meditation and contemplation).

Being the supreme Lord and Creator he is the one who creates, sustains and then concludes this creation and everything in it himself (without any help).

Verily, this Lord (i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness) is known as the Atma or soul of the entire creation. You must be wise enough to understand that the supreme Brahm exists in the form of the Atma, the pure consciousness. [In other words, if Brahm is removed from this world nothing would remain. It is the 'soul' or the most essential and primary requirement for the creation to come into existence and to remain existing. Even if it ends, it is from Brahm that it would re-emerge in due course of time. It is said that Brahm is all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent uniformly in this creation, and this refers to the Atma that secretly lives in the inner-self of all living beings. The Atma is the essence of life and existence; it is a metaphor for life and existence as much as is Brahm. Atma and Brahm are synonymous with each other.] (5).

6. Do not have any regrets, fears or consternations. Don't think that Brahm is beyond your reach. You can overcome all your frustrations and dismay by acquiring specialized knowledge of the Atma, as it would enlighten you about Brahm.' (6).

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Canto 3/Section 1

1. Having acquired the above knowledge from the exalted sage Atharva, sage Shandilya asked him once again—‘Oh Lord! How has this world come into being from that Lord who is so esoteric, mysterious and secret that nothing is known about him, the Lord who is known and represented by the ‘Akshar’ (here referring to the ethereal word OM which is a monosyllabic sound having no forms; the word also means one who is imperishable and not subject to decay and destruction), who does not do anything, who is most auspicious, divine, sublime and holy, who is the only supreme Authority in this creation, and who is revealed in the form of the Atma, the pure consciousness? How is this creation established in him, and how does it finally vanish or dissolve in him at the end?

It is very important to solve this riddle for me; it is necessary for me that I am enlightened to these facts.’ (1).

2-3. Hearing his earnest plea, the exalted sage Atharva replied—‘Oh Shandilya! It is true that the supreme transcendental Brahm is neutral and does nothing. It is also true that it is in the form of an ‘Akshar’ (here referring to the ethereal word OM which is a monosyllabic sound having no forms). In spite of these, Brahm has three subtle forms—called ‘Sakal’ (meaning Brahm having a visible form; or Brahm that has specific attributes), ‘Nishkal’ (having no visible form; having universal virtues in their most sublime form), and ‘Sakal-Nishakal’ (having both the characteristics of a Sakal and a Nishkal Brahm; a composite of both the values) (2-3).

4. Now, the ‘Nishkal’ form of Brahm is being outlined.

Brahm that is an embodiment of Truth, that is an image of extreme bliss, happiness, beatitude and felicity, that does nothing and remains motionless, that is honoured by the epithet of ‘Niranjan’ (i.e. an entity that has no taints, blemishes, darkness and faults of any kind), that is universal and uniformly all-pervading and omnipresent, that is most subtle, atomic and microscopic, that has his mouth in all the four directions (i.e. is able to see, hear, feel, smell and taste everything that exists in any point in this physical world; one from whom nothing is hidden or kept secret), that is indefinable and indescribable, and that is eternal, imperishable and infinite—verily, this subtle, sublime, ethereal, universal, all-encompassing and all-inclusive divine formless appearance or revelation of Brahm is called its ‘Nishkal’ form (4).

5. Now, the form of Brahm known as ‘Sakal’ is being described.

Brahm that is identified with natural Avidya (ignorance), Mool Prakriti (primary Nature) and Maya (delusions), that which is said to have subtle qualities represented or symbolized by the three colours of red, white and black (standing for the Raja Guna, the Sata Guna and the Tama Guna respectively).

When the unqualified, formless and attribute-less divine Being (i.e. Brahm) is visualized as being surrounded by Maya (delusions), he is said to have acquired different colours, such as dark and yellow.

[It is like viewing something with tinted glasses. It is obvious and natural that the thing viewed would adopt the colour of the glass through which it is being viewed. Similarly, when the immaculate and ‘Niranjan’ Brahm is viewed through the veil of Maya around it, the colours of the latter would naturally affect the former, though of course these colours are not the natural and inherent colours or traits of Brahm.]

Assuming these two colours, the same Brahm is called Maheshwar or Lord Shiva (who is responsible for concluding this creation) and Isha or Lord Vishnu (who is responsible for sustenance and protection of the same creation).

[This stanza can be interpreted and read as follows as well—The same Brahm is seen as having a yellow colour to emphasize his role as the sustainer and protector of creation, and as having a dark colour to emphasize his role as the concluder of creation. That is why he is called ‘Maheshwar’ or the Great Lord because he performs two opposite functions simultaneously—one of sustenance and the other of conclusion of creation. The ‘yellow’ colour stands for sustenance and protection, while the ‘dark’ colour stands for destruction. They go hand-in-hand to suggest that what has come into being and so meticulously sustained and looked after would not escape destruction and conclusion in due course of time.]

This is the ‘Sakal’ form of Brahm (5).

6. Finally, the ‘Sakal-Nishkal’ form of Brahm is being described now.

The supreme transcendental Brahm had a wish to empower himself to expand and reveal his non-dual, single and unqualified form that was invisible and most subtle into numerous forms that had various qualities, were gross and visible. To make it possible he did Tapa (penance and austerity) for empowerment.

It was then that the triad of creation came into being due to this Tapa. This ‘triad’ assumed many forms, such as the three ‘Akshars’¹, the three ‘Vyarihitis’², the ‘Gayatri Chanda’ having three steps³, the three primary Vedas⁴, the three Varnas⁵, and the three Agnis or sacred Fires⁶.

This supreme Lord who is known as ‘Bhagvan’⁷ is the supreme Authority in creation. He is endowed with all glories and majesties; he is all-pervading, omnipresent, all-encompassing, universal and uniformly distributed throughout the whole creation; he resides in the subtle heart of all creatures (as their Atma); he is full of maverick tricks and his ways are mysterious and unknown.

It is this Lord who has revealed himself as Brahma the creator of the visible world, as Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation, as Rudra who concludes this creation (so assiduously created by Brahma and so diligently sustained by Vishnu), as Indra (the king of Gods), as all other Gods as well as all types of living creatures in this creation.

It is this Lord that is present everywhere in this creation—in the front, in the rear, in the north (zenith), in the south (nadir), below and above, and everywhere else. In this holistic way, it is he who is everything and everyone in this creation.

It is this Lord who does everything out of his own free will and using his own powers (without any help whatsoever), and he is ever so graceful and benevolent towards his devotees.

It is he who had revealed himself as Lord Dattatreya⁸ who was glorious to look at, remained naked, was delicate and pure as the petals of the lotus flower, had four arms, was not at all fierce and fearsome, was free from all sins and evils, and was self-radiant with the glow of holiness and divinity.

Indeed, the above described form of Brahm is a composite of its Sakal as well as Nishkal forms. [All the glorious virtues of Brahm that are there in existence but cannot be physically perceived are its ‘Nishkal’ form, while that form which can be seen is its

‘Sakal’ form. For instance, the Atma is its Nishkal form while the creature is its Sakal form; Lords Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva are its Nishkal form while Lord Dattatreya is its Sakal form; the ethereal word OM is its Nishkal form while the Vedas are its Sakal form; the Vyarihitis are its Nishkal form while the earth and the sky is its Sakal form. The meaning is now abundantly clear. Both these forms compositely make up this vast creation—it has things that are visible as well as things that are there but not visible (6).

[Note—¹The word *Akshar* literally means a letter. Hence, the three Akshars are the three ‘letters’ of the word OM that stands for Brahm—viz. A, U and M, that symbolized the three aspects of the would-be creation—its origin, its expansion and growth, and its conclusion respectively.

²The three *Vyarihitis* are the first words pronounced by Brahma the creator at the beginning of creation—viz. Bhu from which the terrestrial world came into being, Bhuvaha from which the sky and the lower heaven came into being, and Swaha from which the vast heavens came into being.

³The *Gayatri Chanda* having three steps refers to the first and primary method of composition of verses having three lines in which the Vedas were originally revealed.

⁴The three primary *Vedas* are the Rig/Rik, the Sam and the Yajur Vedas.

⁵The three *Varnas* are the three classes in the society—viz. the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas.

⁶The three *Agnis* or sacred Fires are the following—the ‘Garhyapatya Agni’ which is the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice, the ‘Dakshinagni’ which is the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end, and the ‘Ahavaniya Agni’ which is the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice.

⁷The word *Bhagwan* refers to an enlightened being who possesses certain divine qualities not possessed by ordinary human beings, and which are even difficult for the Gods to have. The word has two parts—‘Bhag’ and ‘Wan’. The 2nd part ‘wan’ means ‘one who possesses’, while the 1st part ‘Bhag’ means ‘one who is like the receptacle or womb’ that harbours the following six qualities or virtues—(1) to have ‘Aishwarya’, which means to possess all the virtues that come under the category of having majesty, powers, wealth, fortune, opulence, flourish, supremacy, sway, dominance, glory, grandeur, omnipotence and other divine faculties in existence; (2) to have all Dharma, which means to possess all virtues that come under the ambit of righteousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness, and nobility of thought and conduct; (3) to possess all the glories and majesties that come under the definition of the word Yash, i.e. to have great fame, glory, majesty and renown; (4) to have Sree, i.e. to possess all wealth, prosperity, pomp and circumstance, to have prestige, dignity, respect, honour, splendour and glory, as well as all other factors associated with those qualities mentioned in serial no. 1-3 above; (5) to have complete and comprehensive Gyan, i.e. to have true, deep, incisive, complete and all-incorporating knowledge, erudition, wisdom, skills, expertise and enlightenment; and (6) at the same time to have immaculate and the highest degree of Vairagya, i.e. to have complete renunciation, detachment, indifference and dispassion towards everything in this world. Hence, anyone who is endowed with the above six divine, eclectic and exemplary qualities is called a Bhagwan.

Conventionally, the word is used as a synonym for the words ‘Lord, God, Supreme Being’, and is used for someone who is glorious, divine, holy, majestic, honoured and revered.

⁸Lord *Dattatreya*—Lord Dattatreya is a fractional incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Verse no. 8 of this Canto establishes that Dattatreya was a manifestation of the Supreme Being.]

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Canto 3/Section 2

1. Sage Shandilya once again asked the exalted sage Atharva—‘Oh Lord! Why is the supreme and transcendental Brahm recognized as being only having ‘One Rasa’ (i.e. having only of form inspite of it being manifested in the form of so many uncountable forms with as many uncountable attributes in this creation), and why is it known as nothing else but an embodiment of the Truth, Consciousness and Bliss?’ (1).

2. Sage Atharva replied—‘Oh Shandilya! Brahm expands or spreads its self without any external aid, and it is the one that makes other entities in this creation expand and spread when it so wishes. This is the reason why Brahm is honoured by the epithet of being ‘supreme’.

[In other words, Brahm does not need any help to fulfill its wishes to accomplish anything, and whatever happens in this creation is because of Brahm. It is Brahm that provides the inspiration, the impetus and the drive to do anything and reach a destination. Brahm is most subtle, atomic and microscopic in its primary form, but it ‘spreads and expands’ to assume the form of this vast and endless world. Though Brahm is only ‘one and non-dual’, it metamorphosed into so many countless elements in this creation which are so varied and different from Brahm that they have no resemblance to Brahm in any way whatsoever but are Brahm revealed in their forms nevertheless. This is a unique achievement, and this is why Brahm is called ‘supreme’. Though Brahm lives in this creation and is an integral part of each single unit of it, yet Brahm transcends all definitions by which this creation is known. Hence, Brahm is honoured by the epithet of being ‘transcendental’.] (2).

3. [Then Shandilya asked—] ‘Why is Brahm known as the Atma?’ (3).

4. [Sage Atharva replied—] ‘It (i.e. Brahm) lives inside each individual creature of this creation (in the form of pure consciousness and the true ‘self’ of the individual living being, as the quintessential element known as the soul of the Jiva, the living being, without which the latter cannot survive)¹, is the one entity that provides uniformity and non-duality to this creation², and is the one who accepts everything and dissolves them into one single indivisible whole³. This is why it is called the ‘Atma’ (4).

[Note—¹The word Atma means the ‘soul’ of any given entity, the essence and the fundamental aspect of anything without which that thing loses its existence, identity and bearing. The Atma is the fundamental essence in the body of all living beings, and without it no body would have any relevance in this creation. The entire existence of the Jiva revolves around the presence of the Atma. For instance, when a thing needs to be expressed or explained, different people would use different words and sentences and expressions to say it, but what matters is the essence of what is being said. This essence is the ‘soul’ of the thing said. If the soul is removed then all that is said is simply a jumble of words. Similarly, the body of a creature has any value only as long as it has life and consciousness in it, otherwise the gross body begins to decay rapidly, and no one would want to have anything to do with it.

Since Brahm is synonymous with ‘consciousness and life’ in this creation, and since the entity that infuses these basic characteristics into the body of the creature to make it

possible for it to be called a 'living and conscious' being is known as the Atma, Brahm and Atma are obviously the same, albeit at different levels of creation. That is, while Brahm is 'consciousness and life' at the macrocosmic level of creation, its counterpart in each single unit of this living creation at the micro level is known as the Atma. Since this Atma is the essence of life and creation, it is the 'soul' of creation.

²Brahm in the form of the Atma is a universal entity because it is undiluted and elementary 'consciousness'. Let us take an example to understand this phenomenon. Water molecule consists of two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen. This universal fact would never change no matter in which form water exists—as ice, liquid water, vapour, steam, cloud, river, ocean or glacier, or in the fundamental essence of anything that is in fluid form. Similarly, it is the Brahm in the form of the Atma that is the only unchanging element in the otherwise most fascinating world where no two things are exactly alike.

³Since everything has its origin in one single point from which they develop and expand, when they have to retract they would revert to this single point. To understand this concept we can take the example of a line or any other figure drawn on a piece of paper. When the pen touches the paper, it first makes a dot at the point where it first comes in contact with the paper. Then the pen moves on the paper and drags this point to any length and any shape or form one wishes to draw. But when one wishes to retrace these lines one would come back to the first point where the pen had first touched the paper. Likewise, though the creation has progressed from its original place and assumed so varied a form that it defies description, yet when it begins its regression it would come back to this single point. This 'single' original point is Brahm. It is Brahm from which this entire creation emerged, then developed and expanded, and it is in this Brahm that it would finally collapse and merge to become one with it.

The instance of the water cited above can also explain this concept. Though water assumes so many forms and is known by so many names, its basic point of origin in two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen would not change. If a molecule of sea water is compared with that of the rain water, no difference would be found. In other words, they all revert back to their parent form as two gaseous elements known as Hydrogen and Oxygen.]

5. [Then Shandilya asked—] 'Why is Brahm known as the Maheshwar (literally the great Ishwar or Lord)?' (5).

6. [Sage Atharva replied—] 'It (i.e. Brahm) is known as Maheshwar because it exercises control and establishes its authority over even those who are most powerful and great in this world by the virtue of the inherent strength and astounding powers and potentials possessed and exhibited by words¹, by sound², and by the stupendous dynamic powers and subtle energy inherently possessed and exhibited by the pure consciousness (that is present in all the creatures as their Atma)³.

Brahm is the superseding cosmic almighty Authority in creation. All other Gods and Goddesses are but merely manifestations of this Brahm, and they are only fractions of Brahm. Therefore, these Gods and Goddesses cannot match Brahm in the least. They can, at the best, represent some or the other divine qualities or virtues of Brahm, but not Brahm in its entirety. Brahm is the God of all Gods; he is the supreme Authority; he is the Supreme Being.

This ability makes it (Brahm) superior to all others in creation, and that is why is it is honoured by the epithet of being called a ‘Maheshwar’—literally meaning the ‘Great Lord’ (6).

[Note—¹Brahm’s first dynamic revelation was in the form of the cosmic ethereal sound which was heard by ancient sages and seers during they meditative sessions and which they conceptualized in the form of the word OM. It was a cosmic vibration reverberating and resonating in the ether, and it is the first sign of energy being generated and some dynamic activity and movement taking place in the otherwise neutral and static cosmic gel prior to the beginning of creation. These vibrations produced ‘sound’ which in its primary form is encapsulated by the monosyllabic word OM. This basic sound was analyzed and underwent the process of refinement to yield the alphabets of the language. These alphabets then formed words, and from the words came into being the scriptures and the spoken language. Both the scriptures and the spoken language helped Brahm to disseminate information and knowledge. Sound is still regarded as the basic sign of life anywhere. That is why when a patient is recovering from coma or some serious illness where he had lost consciousness, doctors ask him to say a word or two to be certain that everything is well with him. All the knowledge is this creation would have been null and void had there been no word to teach them or divulge them.

Huge armies are commanded by words; the teacher controls his students by words. Even the Lord himself is worshipped and shown respects by hymns or prayers which are nothing but words.

²Words need sound to be transmitted from the speaker to the target audience. It is sound that makes words reach others so that they can come to know what one wishes to express. Hence, dissemination of information and knowledge needs not only words but sound as well. This sound has manifested itself as voice and the faculty of speech. Even if one were to assume that huge body of knowledge could still exist in the form of words written in the scriptures, but how would one explain then without the power of sound revealed in the form of voice and the faculty of speech, and how would the listener listen to what is being said if there was no such thing as sound to enable the latter to hear what is being spoken?

The importance of sound over words can be understood by one simple example. When the bell rings in a school, all the students know for instance that they are supposed to attend a particular class or that it is time to go on recess, though no one actually tell them to do so. If one hears a lion roaring in the forest one is chilled to the bone out of fear though the lion is not directly threatening him or speaking any specific language. When the army hears the bugle sound it knows that it is time to charge or do any specific duty as expected to be done when this sound is heard. When one hears the trundle of a train speeding past, even a blind man can know what is happening though no words are spoken.

Therefore it is clear that the supreme Lord exercises his overall control and authority in this creation by the way of sound and words.

³The power of the consciousness needs no introduction—because the very ability to speak comes from the power of the consciousness residing in the body of the speaker, and the power to understand what is being spoken too comes because of the same consciousness present in the hearer. Ascetics are known to possess stupendous mystical powers that are super-natural in nature. They remain silent but achieve stupendous spiritual powers that are simply miraculous by nature. In fact, abstaining from speaking and remaining silent for a certain period of time, for instance doing meditation and contemplation, is certainly more rejuvenating for a man than speaking for this length of time. It is known that some holy men who had no formal knowledge of the scriptures, i.e.

who were not 'lettered' or good 'speakers' either but had attained self-realisation and kindled their latent spiritual energy were able to influence the course of human history by their silent lives and examples they set for others. It is said that if one faces an adversary with the strength of the soul at his command it is certain that the opponent would yield ground and the person would be able to win him over.]

7. [Sage Shandilya asked—] 'Why is it (Brahm) known as Lord Dattatreya?' [Refer last stanzas of verse no. 6 of section 1 of Canto 3.] (7).

8. [Sage Atharva replied—] 'It is because sage Atri did very severe Tapa (austerity and penance) to wish for a son. Pleased by his sincerity and devotion, the splendorous and self-illuminated 'Bhagwan' (Lord God; the Supreme Being) blessed the sage and offered himself as his son. Thereafter, the Lord himself revealed as a son to sage Atri and his wife Anusuiya. In this way he (the Lord) became famous as Lord Dattatreya¹ (8).

[Note—¹The word 'Dattatreya' has two parts—'Datta' and 'Treya'. The first half 'Datta' refers to the Lord who gives boons, and the second part 'Treya' refers to something that has three dimensions.

This latter part 'Treya' again has the following meanings—(1) It refers to Lord Shiva who has three eyes, and hence called 'Trineta', because Shiva is also known as 'Maheshwar', the great Lord by which epithet the Supreme Being is honoured (refer verse no. 5-6). (ii) It refers to the supreme transcendental Brahm which has three forms known as Sakal, Nishkal and Sakal-Nishkal which incorporates in their ambit the entire creation, both the visible and the non-visible, the gross and the subtle (refer Canto 3, section 1, verse nos. 2-6).]

9. A wise, erudite and learned aspirant who comprehends the hidden meaning of what has been said in this Upanishad, and understands the meaning of the various esoteric names of the supreme transcendental Brahm, is able to unravel the mysteries of Brahm. He is indeed able to understand and know everything in this creation. [This is because everything in this creation is a revelation of Brahm; whatever that exists is Brahm in that form.] (9).

10. Once this enlightenment dawns on the aspirant he is able to have a comprehensive knowledge of the 'self' and realise that his 'true self', i.e. his pure conscious Atma, is nothing else but Brahm personified. [This is because the term Brahm is synonymous with the cosmic Consciousness.]

Hence, a wise, erudite and enlightened spiritual aspirant who worships and pays his obeisance to the supreme Lord with this full wisdom and knowledge (about the Atma being Brahm personified) is able to understand and realise the truth of the eclectic statement 'I am the supreme Atma'. That is, he becomes 'Brahm-realised'. [This is because Brahm is the cosmic Atma or soul of creation. The word Atma refers to the essence of creation, the basic element without which nothing matters, nothing exists, nothing has value, and nothing else besides it is therefore true. This basic element and essence of creation is 'consciousness', and it is a synonym of Brahm at the cosmic and macro level of creation as well as of the Atma at the micro level of creation.]

A person who knows or is enlightened about Brahm in the above described form, and then makes the declaration as stated above is indeed able to truthfully say anything about Brahm. [Only a person who has personally attended an event is called an eye-

witness to it. Similarly, a person who has personally experienced the presence of the cosmic consciousness known as Brahm in his own inner-self as the Atma, and realised that this Atma is his 'self', implying that 'he' is none but 'Brahm' himself personified is indeed fully qualified and in his right to teach and say anything about Brahm. Only a teacher who is well-versed in any subject is eligible and competent enough to teach on that subject, for the rest who pretend to know and teach the subject are nothing but imposters who are playing fool with others.] (10).

11. The following verses (Shlokas) are especially dedicated to the supreme Brahm and enumerate his divine glories—'The supreme transcendental Brahm is the Lord who had revealed himself in the form of Dattatreya and Lord Shiva. [For Dattatreya being a manifestation of the Supreme Being, refer to verse nos. 7-8 above. As far as Lord Shiva is concerned, the reason why he is known as 'Maheshwar' or the 'Great Lord' is because he is the Supreme Being, i.e. Brahm, personified.]

The manifestation of the Supreme Being as Dattatreya or Shiva has a body which is most holy, auspicious and divine ('Shivam'), is of a calm, blissful and peaceful countenance ('Shanta'), has a blue complexion like that of the gem known as 'Indra-Neel-Mani' worn by Indra (the king of Gods, hence named after him; the blue sapphire), and is the Lord of all ('Prabhu').

The Lord lives in the Atma or the inner-self of the living being; he resides in the inner-self all creatures as their Atma or soul.

Both in the form of Dattatreya as well as Shiva, the Lord is in the form of an 'Avadhut'. ['Avadhut' is the highest category of Sanyasi or an ascetic who has reached the highest echelons of spiritual realisation. This concept has been especially elucidated upon in the Avadhut Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, being its 24th Upanishad.].

As an Avadhut he remains naked ('Digambar'). [An Avadhut has developed the level of spiritual realisation when he deems himself to be as expansive as the sky, and therefore wraps his gross body not with artificial clothes but with the sky that surrounds him on all the sides.] (11).

12. In the form of Dattatreya and Lord Shiva, the Lord has ash of the sacred fire smeared all over his body, wears matted lock of hairs on the head, and is honoured by the eclectic title of 'Vibhu'—i.e. one who is almighty, omnipresent, all-pervading, all-encompassing, magnanimous, eternal, infinite, all-powerful, immovable, constant and immutable.

He has four arms. [This refers to Lord Vishnu, the second of the Trinity Gods and the sustainer and protector of creation. It ought to be noted that the word 'Vibhu' applies to both Shiva as well as Vishnu.]

He is of a cheerful disposition and countenance.

His eyes are like lotus flowers (12).

13. The Lord is a treasury of Gyan (truthful knowledge and wisdom, enlightenment and realisation) and Yoga (meditation and contemplation). [That is, nothing is not known to the Lord as he is omniscient and all-knowing on the one hand, and well-versed in the art and skill of doing meditation and contemplation, and remains deeply involved in it on the other hand.]

The Lord is the universal Guru (teacher, guide and moral preceptor).

He is very dear to Yogis (ascetics) and is their patron God.

He is always very benevolent and magnanimous towards his devotees and worshippers.

He is the universal witness of all in this creation; he is a witness to everything and every event in this creation.

He is the one who is served, honoured and worshipped by all mystics and those who have attained spiritual realisation (13).

14. The Lord is indeed eternal and truthful. He is the Lord of all the Gods. He is worthy of being always praised and worshipped; he is the only one who should be honoured and sought by all.

In this way, a person who constantly, consistently and persistently remembers and honours this Lord is able to certainly obtain Mukti (freedom, liberation and deliverance) from all sins and their consequences (14).

15. This is indeed the truth. This truth is endorsed by this Upanishad; it is this truth that this Upanishad preaches. Amen! (15).

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(V—B) Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad (Canto 8, paragraph no. 8-12)

Since the focus of our current book is on the theme of “Yoga”, hence only Canto no. 8 is quoted here. Special attention is to be paid to the following paragraphs of this Canto: 8-12.

This great Upanishad was revealed as a discourse given by Lord Vishnu to the creator Brahma. Brahma had asked the Lord to disclose the secrets of the ‘Param Tattva’, the Supreme Principle and the Absolute Truth of creation, by knowing which everything becomes known, and which provides the spiritual aspirant with Mukti or Moksha (liberation, deliverance, freedom, emancipation and salvation).

This Upanishad is a magnificent exposition on the eclectic concepts related to Brahm, the Supreme Being and eternal supreme Consciousness, on how a Jiva, the living being, is, on why the Jiva remains trapped in the world, on what are the paths for obtaining Mukti and Moksha, and what do these terms actually mean, on the various forms this creation takes—the gross and the subtle, the visible and the invisible, the one that is ridden by Avidya and Agyan, or ignorance of the truth as well as by Maya or delusions, and the other that shines by the glory of Vidya and Gyan or knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment, on the four different aspects of this creation which is said to be a manifestation of Brahm, on the mystical meaning of the two esoteric Charms—the Sudarshan Chakra and the Narayan Yantra, and so on and so forth.

It extols and espouses on the supremacy of Brahm, the all-pervading and universally truthful divine entity that is the eternal Consciousness, and the principle of

‘unity in diversity’ which is at the core of the philosophy of Advaitya Vedanta, the eclectic philosophy of ‘non-duality’. Though it describes the many forms that the ultimate Authority and the supreme Lord of creation known as Brahm takes, it ultimately points out that they are none but the same Divinity in all these forms. Brahm has been said to have four Paads or limbs, meaning aspects or principal forms. The whole of the known world within imagination, even the invisible one extending to the farthest corner of creation, represent only one Paad called the Avidya Paad. This includes all the Lokas, the Gods and the Jivas. The other three Paads transcend this Paad and are very subtle and sublime in nature; they are called the Vidya Paad, the Anand Paad and the Turiya Paad. [Refer: Canto 1, paragraph 5-6; Canto 4, paragraph 6.]

This Upanishad derives its name from the fact that Brahm, the Supreme Being, is also known as ‘Maha Narayan’. One of his Paads, the Avidya Paad, is dominated by the Bhuts (elements); it is the comparatively grosser aspect of Brahm. The other three Paads are of subtle nature. Hence the name ‘Tripadvi + Bhut + Maha Narayan = ‘Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan’ Upanishad.

The stupendity and immensity of the greatness of Brahm can be imagined by the fact that other Gods who are themselves no less great and powerful are but only a fraction of Brahm; they are merely Brahm carrying out specific functions in these forms. Some of the names of these Gods as mentioned in this Upanishad are ‘Maha Narayan’, ‘Adi-Narayan’, ‘Narayan’, ‘Maha Vishnu’, ‘Viraat Purush’, ‘Adi-Viraat’, ‘Brahma’, ‘Hiranyagarbha’, and so on.

The present Upanishad is unique in the sense that it intertwines in its narration two philosophies—one based on the philosophy of Vedanta which recognises Brahm as the Supreme Being, and the other on the philosophy of Vaishnav cult which regards Lord Vishnu as the Supreme Being. In the process it establishes the fact that essentially both are the same as the Supreme Being is known by many names, including Brahm and Vishnu.

The main thrust of this Upanishad is to emphasise the point that though Brahm is said to exist in all these forms, basically it is a ‘non-dual’ and an immutable divine entity that remains uniform and universal. It is this Brahm that exists as the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness and the universal Truth of creation. The question as to why then does Brahm appear to have duality and various evident forms that cannot be simply denied or wished away but are definitely not ‘Brahm’ is emphatically answered and explained in detail in this grand Upanishad. It is this eclectic divinity known as the non-dual supreme Brahm that is so much extolled and revered by the Vedas and the Upanishads. It is this non-dual Brahm that is the aim of attainment of all spiritual aspirants and seekers of Truth. This Brahm is all-pervading, all-encompassing and all-knowing. It is this Brahm that transcends all known definitions and even extends beyond imagination. [Refer Canto 1, paragraphs 4-6; Canto 2, paragraphs 1-8, 12, Canto 3, paragraphs 1-6; and Canto 4, paragraphs 1-6.]

The Upanishad belongs to the ‘Devdarshi’ branch of the Atharva Veda (refer Canto 1, paragraph no. 2), and is in the style of long narrative prose as opposed to the system of verses that is usually employed in the Upanishads. It is taught by a learned teacher to his earnest disciple.

The Upanishad consists of a total of eight Cantos divided into two main sections—the first is called ‘Purva Kanda’ consisting of four Cantos (nos. 1 to 4), and the second is called ‘Uttar Kanda’ consisting of another four Cantos (nos. 5 to 8).

Canto 1 describes what is meant by the enigmatic and most esoteric term ‘Brahm’, who he is or what it is. It enumerates the grand characteristics and magnificent divine qualities that make Brahm so unique and enigmatic entity in creation that is lauded and revered by the scriptures, besides describing the four Paads of Brahm, literally meaning the limbs of Brahm, and implying the different eclectic forms or aspects of Brahm, both at the macrocosmic as well as the microcosmic level of creation. The four Paads of Brahm have been explained elaborately in Canto 4, paragraph nos. 2-3, 6, and Canto 8, paragraph no. 4.

Canto 2 expands upon the discussion of Canto 1 and narrates the two basic forms of Brahm—the ‘Nirguna’ or ‘Niraakaar’ form which refers to that aspect of Brahm which is without any attributes, is indefinable and invisible, and is beyond the reach of mind, intellect and imagination, and the ‘Saguna’ or ‘Saakaar’ form which displays characteristics quite the opposite of Nirguna—viz. it has definite attributes, is visible and verifiable, is comprehensible and described by the scriptures. In the course of this discussion another very important principle concerning Brahm is explained—the concept of Advaitya or non-duality. Included in this Canto are the description of the Genesis of Creation and the all-inclusive and all-pervading nature of Brahm as the Viraat Purush. The concept of Advaitya in the context of Brahm having different Paads and forms as Nirguna and Saguna is further explained in Canto 8 (paragraph nos. 2-7).

Canto 3 describes the ‘Mool-Avidya’—literally the primary cause of ignorance of the Truth, and the various units of measurement of time on the celestial scale such as the length of one life of Brahma the creator, the length of one life of Vishnu, the length of one life of Viraat Purush, and the length of one life of Adi-Narayan, the Primal Purush. This measurement helps one to understand the *relative nature* of the terms ‘birth and death’, or ‘creation and destruction’, or ‘day and night’ etc. on the cosmic scale. This Canto also explains why Brahm appears to have multifarious forms, and cites a beautiful analogy of the crystal appearing to be red when in proximity with the China Rose flower. It then illustrates the formless omnipresence of Brahm by citing the example of the Fire.

Canto 4 further elaborates upon the concept of Advaitya or non-dual nature of Brahm which was first introduced in Canto 2. It explains why Brahm is imagined or visualised to have a dual form whereas it is not the truth as explained in Canto 3 along with enumerating some of the grand divine qualities of Brahm that make the latter so holy and unique. It also describes who a Jiva, a living being is in a very magnificent manner, and then outlines the path leading to Mukti or Moksha (liberation, deliverance, freedom, emancipation and salvation).

Canto 5 answers three very pertinent spiritual questions—viz. (i) How and why does Avidya (ignorance or lack of true knowledge) reappear once it has been destroyed or eliminated?, (ii) Why does a creature remain deluded and trapped in this world of artificiality, and how to get rid of it and become freed?, and (iii) What is the path to Mukti—or liberation and deliverance from this ensnaring world. In the process it describes in graphic detail the path taken by a devotee of Lord Vishnu when he leaves the gross mortal body and embarks upon his spiritual journey to reach the highest echelons of heaven where Vishnu resides, the heaven known as Vaikunth.

The description is continued in the next two Cantos, Canto no. 6 and 7, as well. These three Cantos, viz. 5, 6 and 7, describe in graphic detail the most fascinating journey undertaken by the spiritual traveller as he crosses the various layers of heaven, called Vaikunth, the abode of Lord Vishnu, en-route to his final destination to the Lord Adi-Narayan, the primordial and primary Lord of creation, the Supreme Being who is also known as Adi-Maha Vishnu.

Canto 6 describes the path through many Vaikunths which are traditionally regarded as being the abode of Lord Vishnu, the Lord who is considered as being synonymous with the Viraat Purush, the Supreme Being and Brahm personified. So by describing more than one Vaikunth the Upanishad alludes to the relative nature of existence and extends the ‘philosophy of relativity’ enunciated earlier in Canto 3.

Further, by citing a number of instances such as the existence of a number of Universes and many Vaikunthas (Canto 6), different time scales (Canto 3), the many Paads of Brahm (Canto 1), and the simultaneous existence of both Saguna as well as Nirguna Brahm the Upanishad highlights the fact that the actual and real Truth, though being always and irrevocably ‘one, immutable and unchangeable’, does appear to have more than one meaning, and a man who gets deluded by this dichotomy and schism is the one who is under the spell of Maya and Avidya.

The second half of Canto 7 is dedicated to the description of the Sudarshan Chakra and the Narayan Yantra which is a worship instrument used in mystical forms of worship of Lord Narayan or Vishnu. All the Mantras used in their construction are given in full along with their location and meaning.

Canto 8 essentially describes the following topics as a sort of summary of the preaching of this Upanishad—(i) the non-dual or Advaitya nature of Brahm (paragraph nos. 1-3), (ii) the four Paads of Brahm (paragraph no. 4), (iii) the proclamation, called the Mahavakyas, of a Brahm-realised person (paragraph nos. 5-6), (iv) the attainment of Mukti (spiritual liberation and deliverance), (v) the two great forms of Yoga, viz. Saalamba and Niraalamba (paragraph nos. 8-9), (vi) the importance of Bhakti or devotion (paragraph no. 12), (vii) how to have the knowledge of the Param Tattva (paragraph nos. 13-14), and (viii) who a true Guru (teacher) is, and his importance.

The Upanishad concludes by emphasizing the profound spiritual benefits of studying and implementing its teachings.

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Uttar Kand—Canto 8

[This Canto essentially describes the following topics as a sort of summary of the preaching of this Upanishad—(i) the non-dual or Advaitya nature of Brahm (paragraph nos. 1-3), (ii) the four Paads of Brahm (paragraph no. 4), (iii) the proclamation, called the Mahavakyas, of a Brahm-realised person (paragraph nos. 5-6), (iv) the attainment of Mukti (spiritual liberation and deliverance), (v) the two great forms of Yoga, viz. Saalamba and Niraalamba (paragraph nos. 8-9), (vi) the importance of Bhakti or devotion (paragraph no. 12), (vii) how to have the knowledge of the Param Tattva (paragraph nos. 13-14), and (viii) who a true Guru (teacher) is, and his importance.

This Upanishad concludes by emphasising the profound spiritual benefits or rewards one gets by studying and understanding the great teaching of this Upanishad, and implementing them in practice.]

1. The great grandfather of creation, Brahma, asked Lord Maha Vishnu—‘Oh Lord! How do we reconcile between the two opposite forms of yours—one that says that you are the Advaitya Brahm (the non-dual philosophy of Vedanta that basically states that the cosmic Consciousness and the Absolute Truth of creation are unequivocally one and not two, and that Brahm, a term used to encompass both, is therefore also one and not two; this Brahm is indivisible, immutable, all-pervading, invisible, most sublime and subtle, has no forms, characteristic features and attributes, etc., and since everything in this creation is nothing but Brahm in its form, it follows that each unit of creation is fundamentally the same as the other), and the other that describes many Vaikunths (the numerous abodes of Lord Vishnu), Bhavans (buildings; various Lokas or worlds), their surrounding walls, Vimaans (chariots, altars, shrines, spires or steeples etc.) and other such things which have different gross forms, varied shapes and sizes, and a physical existence (as described in the concluding paragraph nos. 15-17 of Canto 5, and the whole Cantos 6 and 7 of this Upanishad)?’ (1).

[Note—In this context, refer to Canto 1, paragraph nos. 4, 6, and Canto 2, paragraph nos. 1-8, 11 which also deal with the same question.]

2. Lord Vishnu dispelled his doubts by replying—‘What you have said is correct. I’ll explain it to you by citing examples.

Just like ‘pure gold’ can have many forms such as a wrist-band, a crown, an arm-band etc. without disturbing the inherent nature and intrinsic quality of the metal known as ‘gold’ (in other words, none of these forms affect the fundamental nature and quality of the metal known as ‘gold’ with the atomic number 79 just because gold has changed its shape and cast into various designs by the goldsmith), just like the ‘water’ present in the ocean assumes so many varied forms such as small and large waves, froth, bubbles, hail that falls from the sky, salty water, ice etc. without changing its own basic nature and characteristic quality (in other words, none of these forms would in any way alter or affect the basic molecular structure of water which essentially consists of two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen—H₂O), just like ‘earth’ retains its basic characteristics, its fundamental qualities and its intrinsic value inspite of having so many varied external features as marked by the presence of innumerable mountains and hills of all imaginable contours and dimensions, countless varieties of plants such as large and sturdy trees or the humble grass, shrubs and creepers (in other words, though the earth is punctuated by so many varied external features, though it displays such diversity in its external form, its basic structure of being a round globe made of the element known as ‘earth’ is not at all compromised)—in the same way, all the forms that I take in this creation are basically the various revelations of my one fundamental universal form which is the non-dual form, the one that is called ‘Advaitya Brahm’.

All the myriad forms that are seen in this creation, all the variety that is observed in this creation, all the numerous contours, shapes, sizes, colours and forms that this creation takes are nothing but my own form, simply because the entire creation is nothing but ‘me’ revealed in its form.

Not a single atom exists that is not 'me'. Or, if it had not been for me, there would have been no creation in existence now. [In other words, even the minutest of things as well as the most colossus of things are nothing but 'me' revealed in these forms. Nothing exists without 'me'. The pronoun 'me' stands for the Supreme Being known as Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness and the Atma or true 'Self' of creation.] (2).

3. The great grandfather Brahma asked again—'Oh Lord! It is said that 'Param Vaikunth' (the supreme heaven or the abode of Maha Vishnu) is the 'Param Moksha' (the ultimate goal that the spiritual aspirant strives to reach in order to find final liberation and deliverance for his soul)¹.

Everywhere, in all the scriptures, it is universally said that 'Param Moksha' is only of *one* kind, and hence its Anand (bliss) should also be of one kind. Then how come there are so many Vaikunths and so many oceans of Anand etc. (as described by you in earlier Cantos while you were describing the journey of the aspirant through many heavens as he rose higher and higher to reach the Param Vaikunth)? (3).

[Note—¹The same question has been answered in a different way in Canto 1, paragraph nos. 4-6; Canto 3, paragraph nos. 2-7; Canto 4, paragraph nos. 1-13; Canto 5, paragraph nos. 1-14.

The *Vaikunth* is the abode of Lord Vishnu, and therefore the *Param Vaikunth* is the supreme abode of the Maha Vishnu, Supreme Being. It refers to the divine abode where Maha Vishnu or the Adi Narayan resides. If the Supreme Being is one, and if Vishnu is to be regarded as the Supreme Being, then the question arises why are there so many Vaikunths as narrated in Canto 5, paragraph nos. 15-16, Canto 6, paragraph nos. 1-20, and Canto 7, paragraph nos. 1-14 which describe a number of Vaikunths that the spiritual aspirant crosses before he reaches the ultimate destination of the Param Vaikunth described in Canto 5, paragraph no. 17, Canto 6, paragraph nos. 21-22, and Canto 7, paragraph nos. 16-21.

The reason why there is so much confusion about the truthfulness of Brahm is given in Canto 4, paragraph no. 8-13; and Canto 6, paragraph no. 12-14. Essentially it states that it is the Maha Maya (the great delusion creating powers of Brahm) and Avidya (ignorance or lack of knowledge of the ultimate Truth) that is the root cause of all confusions and perplexities.

The *Param Moksha* is the final liberation and deliverance of the Jiva or the living being, the ultimate salvation and emancipation of the soul. When this spiritual destination is reached, there is no re-birth and its consequential horrors. The Param Moksha has been described in the context of the Param Vaikunth mentioned above in Canto 5, paragraph no. 17, Canto 6, paragraph nos. 21-22, Canto 7, paragraph nos. 16-21, and the Canto 8, paragraph nos. 1-7.

The Param Moksha in the simple terms of Vedanta is that stage in the spiritual journey or search of a man for his final resting place when his individual 'self', his Atma which is pure consciousness, recognises who it is, and then merges with the parent, the cosmic 'Self', the Supreme Atma of creation, the cosmic Consciousness from it had somehow separated out of ignorance and delusions. This removes any distinction between them, and with this merger the individual Atma loses its independent identity to become the universal Atma. The individual Atma becomes one with and inseparable as well as indistinguishable from the universal Atma known as Brahm. This achievement is Brahm-hood. It is self-realisation that leads to Brahm-realisation.]

4. 'It is alright', said Lord Vishnu, and continued with his explanation. 'Thousands of Brahmaands (universes or worlds) are said to exist in only one Paad of Brahm known as the Avidya Paad. [Refer Canto 1, paragraph no. 5; Canto 4, paragraph nos. 2-6; Canto 6, paragraph nos. 2-14. The Avidya Paad is the lowest aspect or limb of Brahm, and as the name suggests, it has a preponderance of Avidya or lack of truthful knowledge. Anything that is based on falsehood is obviously bound to be false itself. This is why this world is characterised by the presence of delusions, confusions, doubts, perplexities, schisms and dichotomies.]

Even as the presence of countless worlds do not affect the basic characteristic of the fourth Paad of Brahm as being dominated by Maya (delusions) and Avidya (ignorance and lack of knowledge of the Truth), the presence of countless Lokas (worlds), numerous Vaikunths (heavens) and as many countless Vibhutis (glorious virtues and magnificent aspects of this creation) in the 'Anda' (the cosmic egg; the greater Universe) do not affect its basic nature and virtue (which is that it harbours the magical spark of life called 'consciousness' that cannot be defined or replicated).

All the Brahmaands have countless Lokas and Vaikunths, and all of them are accepted by the scriptures. [And this is why this present Upanishad has enumerated many Vaikunths and other Lokas in earlier Cantos while it narrates the journey of the spiritual aspirant to the supreme Vaikunth where he would finally find his Param Moksha. The Upanishad unequivocally stresses that Brahm is 'Advaitya' or non-dual, and that there is therefore only one type of 'Mukti' or liberation and deliverance, and it is known as the Kaivalya Mukti. Getting rid of falsehood is tantamount to attaining this Kaivalya Mukti, because then the spiritual aspirant would realise that Brahm is to be found no where in the sky but inside his own 'self' as the pure consciousness known as the Atma. This knowledge is enlightening and 'Bodh' of the highest order. It culminates in self and Brahm realisation. It is true form of Mukti, because then Brahm is attained most easily as this cosmic Consciousness is very close to the seeker as it resides in his own bosom. True Mukti would be the merger of the individual's own soul with the cosmic Soul so as to become one with it. This fact is endorsed and stressed in the present paragraph.]

When this is the state of affairs of only one Paad of Brahm known as Avidya Paad, then one can well imagine the situation of other Paads as well—they would also be the same. [The other three Paads are known as (i) Vidya Paad or Gyan Paad, (ii) Anand Paad, and (iii) Turiya Paad—refer Canto 1, paragraph no. 5; Canto 4, paragraph no. 3, 6.]

The emergence of an extreme sense of vibrant Anand (surging and un-inhibited spiritual bliss, ecstasy, beatitude and felicity) is the hallmark of Moksha (spiritual liberation and deliverance; salvation and emancipation). [When one reaches one's avowed destination after an arduous journey and great efforts, overcoming numerous temptations, troubles, distractions, hurdles and handicaps en-route, it is natural and obvious that unbound exhilaration and profound ecstasy would overwhelm him when success is finally achieved. So, the spontaneous sprouting of extreme Anand is a sign of the spiritual aspirant having attained Moksha.]

Since extreme Anand is obtained in all the three Paads of Brahm, they are all equivalent to the 'Param Moksha Dhaam'—i.e. to the supreme destination of the soul where it finds freedom from the horrors and torments of this world.

All the three Paads are equivalent in nature to the Kaivalya state of existence. [The word Kaivalya refers to non-dual existence because literally it means 'one of its

kind; the only one'. Since only the Absolute Truth can be 'Kaivalya', it follows that these three states of Brahm are the 'truthful' form of Divinity. Again, since Brahm is synonymous with 'consciousness', it also follows that Anand is the only true state of existence or the natural state of consciousness. Any other state that is not Anand is therefore not the truthful and natural state of existence of consciousness. Since 'consciousness' is the 'true self' of the spiritual aspirant, when the latter finds Anand he is deemed to have found out who or what his 'real and truthful self' is, and then he discovers the universal Atma or soul which is his 'true self'. This Atma is eternal, imperishable, blissful, enlightened and always liberated. It is a sublime and subtle entity, and not the gross body with which the aspirant had identified himself all along till the time he had made this discovery. It is the body that suffers, that does deeds, gets entangled in the world because it relates to its gross aspects and sense objects, and not the Atma which is distinct from the gross body and separate from it. When the spiritual aspirant thus becomes 'self-realised', he is filled with Anand. This 'self-realisation' is a metaphoric way of saying that the aspirant has reached the 'Vidya Paad or Gyan Paad' of Brahm. Since he is filled with ecstasy and feels exhilarated, he has also reached the 'Anand Paad'. When he has become firmly established in these two Paads and there is no scope of his ever reverting back to the first Paad of Avidya, it is said that he has reached the Turiya Paad of transcendental existence. Spiritually speaking, he has obtained 'Moksha', or he has obtained liberation and deliverance from the troubles that are caused to him due to horrible delusions and ignorance that had swirled around him while he was still in the world and confused about the Truth—i.e. till he was living in the 'Avidya Paad' of Brahm.]

In this eclectic higher state of existence of consciousness, everything becomes full of Anand, i.e. the aspirant is so detached from the world in higher states of spiritual realisation that he is oblivious of anything that may be the cause of any kind of misery, pain, grief, agony, distress, tribulation or trouble for him. As a result, he is always submerged in an endless ocean of Anand—or bliss, ecstasy, beatitude and felicity unbound. With this attainment, he is unconcerned with anything else; he becomes oblivious of anything else.

Hence, he always experiences the vast expanse of the eternal and truthful Brahm's equally eternal and truthful Anand, with its countless shades of ecstasy and bliss that this realisation brings in its wake, spread all around him. In other words, he observes Anant Vaikunths (i.e. Vaikunths that have no end, and are therefore eternal) and Anant oceans of Param Anand (i.e. endless oceans of supreme bliss) flowing endlessly through this Vaikunth. [This stanza basically repeats what has been said above to stress the point in a metaphoric way.] (4).

5. When the spiritual aspirant reaches that divine abode (i.e. the Param Vaikunth as described in paragraph nos. 1-20 of Canto 7) and meditates upon the divine form of the Lord (i.e. of Adi-Narayan as described in paragraph nos. 67-69 of Canto 7), he bows before the Lord, performs circumambulation, worships the Lord in various other ways, and obtains or experiences an extreme sense of bliss, happiness and contentedness.

He sits down calmly and focuses his attention on the primarily Advaitya (non-dual) aspect or nature of the Lord (Adi-Narayan). [That is, he gathers himself to concentrate his attention and mind on one single aim of his life, which is to obtain the

Absolute Truth that is always 'one' and not more than one. So he tells himself to forget about all the different types of charming scenes and worlds that he had encountered on his way to this ultimate goal of life. These scenes and worlds were caused by Maya and Avidya, and are equivalent to the different temptations proffered by the Devil to divert the man from his chosen spiritual path]

While specially meditating and contemplating upon this universal and uniform Truth (i.e. Brahm or the Supreme Being; here referring to the cosmic Consciousness also known as the Atma) that is Advitya by nature, he is filled with an immense sense of spiritual fulfilment and bliss. This divine experience that comes with being realised and enlightened is very dynamic and vibrant, and it drowns the aspirant in nectar of 'Bodhaanand'—i.e. fills him with extreme Anand (bliss, ecstasy, beatitude, felicity and joys) that come with Bodh (enlightenment, wisdom and awareness of the Truth). [This is because the spiritual aspirant has finally attained his much cherished dream and objective in life.]

Being thus self-realised, Brahm-realised and enlightened about the Truth, he repeatedly remembers the Maha Vakyas (the great sayings of the Vedas and the Upanishads) and exclaims or proclaims—

'Brahmaasmi' or I am Brahm; 'Ahamasmi' or Indeed it is I/me; 'Brahmahamasmi' or I am indeed Brahm; 'Yoahamasmi' or That is I/me; 'Brahmaamashmi' or Brahm is I/me; 'Ahamevaaham' or I am indeed I/me. [These statements obviously establish the fact that the spiritual aspirant has become steeped in the eclectic philosophy of Advaitya Vedanta which stresses on the non-duality and uniformity between the individual 'self' or the Atma and the cosmic 'Self' or the Brahm. This is because both are 'consciousness' existing in different planes of existence, one is known as the Jiva and the other is called Brahm. Fundamentally there is no difference between the two. Refer Canto 6, paragraph no. 22.]

'I am burning 'Ahantaa' (the false notion of duality and distinction between two aspects of the same thing) by offering it to the sacred fire. Swaha!' [The word 'Swaha' is uttered when one makes offerings to the fire during formal fire sacrifices. Here, the aspirant is eliminating all his doubts and confusions about Brahm by symbolically burning doubts and confusions in the fire.] (5).

6. When the spiritual aspirant is firmly established in the belief that 'I am Brahm', it is then that he is filled with immense Anand, is spiritually cleansed, and is fully contented and fulfilled. In that event, he is naturally attracted towards 'me' and finally merges in 'me' who am the supreme Brahm in the form of Narayan.

Just like the swirling and rapidly flowing water of great rivers gush into the ocean to become one with it, and just like huge dynamic waves that rise from the surface of the ocean with immense force fall back into the same ocean to vanish forever, the self-and-Brahm-realised aspirant enthusiastically exclaims 'I am a personification of Sachiddanand' (i.e. I am the truth, consciousness and bliss personified), 'I am Ajanmaa' (i.e. I do not have a birth as I am eternal and imperishable), and 'I am Paripurna' (i.e. I am fulfilled and fully contented, I have no desires whatsoever left) and sheds his individuality to become one with and indistinguishable from 'me', the supreme Brahm known as Adi-Narayan.

When this comes about, the spiritual aspirant turns into an ocean that is calm and quiet, having no surging waves. He becomes an ocean of peace and tranquillity himself.

He becomes a symbolic base and an endless ocean of Advaitya. [That is, he is firmly established in the eclectic notion of non-duality, and no matter how many surging rivers representing different schools of thoughts and philosophies come thundering towards him, they cannot disturb his state of spiritual bliss, peace, tranquillity, quietude and serenity. On the contrary, they themselves undergo a change and lose their various independent identities as distinct philosophies to become 'Advaitya' or uniformly 'one' themselves. This can be explained by a simple instance—so many rivers come thundering towards the ocean, but when they fall into it they all become one like the ocean. The ocean does not lose its identity, but the rivers do.]

He becomes an ocean of truth, consciousness and bliss—collectively called 'Sat-Chit-Anand (6).

7. Any person who follows this path as described above and implements its principles in life is certain to become one with Narayan¹. [That is, he would obtain the form of Mukti, or liberation and deliverance from this body and world, by dissolving his own identity and becoming one with the Lord known as Narayan. In terms of Vedanta, he would merge his soul with the cosmic Soul known as Brahm, never to take a new birth again, and thereby getting rid from all the horrors and miseries that are associated with the soul having to reside in a gross body that suffers and dies, as well as the having to deal with the countless delusions and temptations presented by this artificial world of material sense objects.]

All great hermits, ascetics, sages and seers have obtained Mukti (final liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation) by diligently following this hallowed path. Indeed, countless realised ascetics have obtained mystical powers (i.e. have reached higher levels of spiritualism and accessed great mystical authority and potentials which helped them to reach their destination of finding Mukti without hindrance) by following this acclaimed spiritual path.' (7).

[Note—¹Refer Canto 1, paragraph no. 6; Canto 2, paragraph no. 12; Canto 5, paragraph no. 17; and Canto 6, paragraph no. 22.]

8. [Lord Vishnu cites an instance of some other disciple asking his Guru some pertinent question, and uses this discourse to explain further to Brahma the doctrines about Brahm that have been elucidated upon in this Upanishad.]

After hearing the above discourse, the disciple asked the teacher—'Oh Lord! What are 'Saalamba' and 'Niraalamba' Yogas?' (8).

[Note—The word *Aalamba* means to take support of, to rely on, a prop, a stay, a reason, a dependence upon something, an object which helps to support some other object.

The word *Yoga* means to bring about a union or to establish uniformity between two separate entities. In the context of the spiritual aspirant's desire to find Mukti by worshipping his chosen deity, Yoga would mean an instrument or exercise that helps him to obtain his cherished aim or goal of obtaining access to or obtaining nearness with the deity he adores and worships. Since the deity worshipped in this Upanishad is Adi-Narayan or Maha Vishnu representing the supreme Brahm, the particular effort or path followed to reach this deity would be by the aspirant's Yoga.

Hence, Saalamba Yoga is defined in paragraph no. 9, and Niraalamba Yoga in paragraph no. 10-12.]

9. [The teacher replied—] ‘The ‘Saalamba Yoga’ is that in which the spiritual aspirant focuses his attention or meditates upon (i.e. takes the help of) an image of the worshipped deity to reach his spiritual destination while remaining aloof from all humdrum activities of the gross world which might be a cause of any kind of distraction or diversion for him. [The word ‘Saalamba’ means ‘with a help; with an aid’.]

This image of the chosen deity has a certain form, such as the one which has a holy feet and a certain countenance.

So, an aspirant who chooses this path towards his spiritual destination meditates upon an image of the deity he worships and focuses his attention on its holy figure, especially the feet, or even on its divine halo and general countenance. [That is, he takes the help of an image to reach his destination of being close to the Lord he worships. This image is just an ‘image’ of the principal Lord, and not the Lord himself. It just helps the aspirant to concentrate his faculties on the Divinity he worships; it is like a prop that helps him to stand up and walk up to his desired goal in life, but not the goal itself! This method has been devised by the scriptures to make something that is very enigmatic, mysterious and esoteric to come within reach of and become accessible to an ordinary aspirant.] (9).

10. The ‘Niraalmaba Yoga’ is that when the spiritual aspirant becomes completely neutral and disassociates himself from all things physical and gross by their nature. Hence, he discards with a large barge-pole all such formal processes of reaching his spiritual destination such as worshipping a deity or its image having a name and form by adopting certain formal forms of activities that are ritualistic, obligatory and mechanical in nature. [The word ‘Niraalamba’ means the opposite of Saalamba. Therefore, it means ‘without a help; without an aid’.]

He even pays no attention to the natural inclinations of his Anthakaran (i.e. his mind, intellect, sub-conscious and ego) that may advise him to the contrary. [For instance, his mind may suggest to him to worship this and that, to go here and there on a pilgrimage, to do this or that deed that can be spiritually beneficial for him, and so on simply because so many people are doing it from immemorial times and therefore logically there must be some benefit in doing so or there must be some truth in it. Then his ego might compel him to do some specified deeds such as holding large religious ceremonies to establish himself as a religious man in society. But a truly wise and enlightened man is he who just smiles and looks the other way from such superficial and hollow activity. He neglects all such prodding of his Antahakran, his inner voice that has unfortunately been influenced by misconceptions and wrong advice, and instead steadfastly follows the path he has fixed for himself after due diligent research and as advised by the scriptures. The point to note here is that the importance of doing proper research in order to choose the correct path is not to be underestimated or undermined by wrongly interpreting this edict of the Upanishad. What is intended here is that once the path is selected after due diligence, once one has devoted sufficient time and energy to select the path to be followed by him that would be most beneficial for his spiritual welfare and provide him with Mukti and Anand, one must then stick to it without dithering, without being uncertain of it or its benefits or where it would lead him. He should not pay attention to so many distractions that come in his way, because if he does

he would make himself a breeding ground of utter confusions and bewilderments of immense dimensions. It is this single-minded pursuit of the desired goal that can help the spiritual aspirant to find Mukti or liberation and deliverance from this ocean-like world in the limited time of one life-span he has to his disposal.]

This is called ‘Niraalamba Yoga’—or the effort made to reach the spiritual destination without taking any help from any external medium.’ (10).

11. [The disciple wondered—] ‘If the Niraalamba Yoga is so difficult or abstract (because it circumvents the need or avoids the use of any physical means to worship the chosen deity), say how can one implement this Yoga with success? Who is eligible or competent to follow this path? What are his special qualities?’ (11).

12. [The Guru removed his doubts by replying—] ‘A person who possesses the noble virtue of not having any trace of Ahankar or false pride and ego in him (i.e. who is humble and simple-hearted), a person who has realised that the Tattva (the essence, the truth) he is pursuing is eternal and imperishable, that this Tattva is the pure consciousness that resides in his own self as the Atma rather than anywhere outside, that this Atma is of a very subtle and sublime nature, that it cannot be physically verified or grasped like the material sense objects of this world but can only be experienced and witnessed at the subtle level of existence, that this Atma is a microcosmic image of the cosmic Atma known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Being, whom he wishes to attain, that junking of the delusions created by the numerous misconceptions in this world is the only way to successfully reach this goal, a person who has inculcated other such noble and wise thoughts—such persons are eligible to follow the path of Niraalmaba Yoga. In other words, only a person who has acquired truthful Gyan is eligible and competent to follow and attain success in the path of Niraalamba Yoga. But it is extremely rare to find such a person.

Hence, it is said that the spiritual path of ‘Bhakti Yoga¹’ to obtain Mukti is an excellent and the easiest path to follow irrespective of the fact whether the candidate is eligible or ineligible for following the path of Niraalamba Yoga.

Bhakti Yoga is without any discernible hurdles or big obstacles that may be too difficult to overcome. Bhakti Yoga bestows Mukti—i.e. it helps the spiritual aspirant to obtain liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

Devotees or the followers of Bhakti Yoga are able to obtain ‘Tattva-Gyan’ or knowledge of the essential Truth, without much effort or delay.’ [In other words, they can experience the Anand, or the spiritual bliss that comes with awareness of the essential principle of creation, the ‘Tattva’, that becomes known upon self-realisation and Brahm-realisation much easily even without having to unduly exert themselves or follow stern doctrines. When a person reaches the spiritual goal of Brahm-realisation, he enthusiastically proclaims the statements called the Mahavakyas as narrated in paragraph nos. 5-6 of this Canto 8. It marks the culmination of his spiritual journey.] (12).

[Note—¹It is easy to follow the path of Bhakti Yoga, or having devotion for and submission to the chosen deity as a means to attain Mukti, or liberation and deliverance from this world, from the gross body, from the cycle of birth and death, and from the accompanying endless cycle of miseries, pains, sorrows, troubles and torments.

Hence, it is usually prescribed as the general and easy method for obtaining Mukti as it would be effective whether or not the concerned person is sufficiently fine-tuned

mentally, intellectually and emotionally to follow the more evolved and powerful, but rather complex and arduous path of Niraalamba Yoga, thinking it to be too abstract and difficult to be followed by them.

On careful examination we see that there is a subtle difference between all the three types of Yogas prescribed in this Upanishad for attaining Mukti. In Bhakti Yoga complete devotion, faith and submission is expected for a single deity of choice of the spiritual aspirant. In this, it is similar to the Saalamba Yoga because it takes the help of some form of deity to whom the seeker of Mukti surrenders himself and has devotion for.

Pure form of Saalamba Yoga involves many sorts of ritualistic practices such as doing fire sacrifices, observing sacraments and chanting of Mantras, undertaking formal forms of worship using Yantras and Chakras described earlier in this Upanishad, honouring a plethora of Gods and Goddesses, doing charities and other noble deeds, and so on and so forth. These follow a set pattern, whereas in Bhakti Yoga the devotee can worship his deity the way he wants—he can treat his God as his son, his friend, his beloved, his life-partner, his Lord, his Guru, etc., and go about devoting himself to the chose deity accordingly. This freedom of approach is denied in the rigorous form of Saalamba Yoga which relies on formalities and strict observance of rules and tenets. Therefore, Bhakti is informal while Saalamba is formal.

The Niraalamba Yoga, on the other hand, does away with all externals completely. It needs no external forms of deities to whom worship is offered, nor does it need formal exercises such as the fire sacrifices. It has the dominant role of Gyan—pursuance of truthful knowledge and the path shown by it. It is mind-centric because it revolves around knowledge, erudition, wisdom and enlightenment. Here the intellect and the mind play the dominant role instead of the gross body that played the main role in Bhakti Yoga and the Saalamba Yoga. The Niraalmaba Yoga uses Gyan as a tool to achieve Mukti. This is of course the path of meditation and contemplation that leads to self and Brahm realisation.

In practice, a wise man is one who employs a judicious mix of all the three forms of Yoga to reach his spiritual goal. It's like a man employing many modes to reach his chosen destination—he treks, hitch-hikes, rides a horse, takes a boat, at times swims, and may adopt any convenient method that is handy for him. His main objective is to reach the destination.]

13. [The disciple wished to know more about this Tattva Gyan, so he enquired]—‘How can one have this Tattva Gyan?’ (13).

14. [The learned teacher replied in order to enlighten him—] ‘The Lord who loves all his devotees very much himself ensures that all their spiritual hurdles are effectively removed. He protects them from all the troubles or nuisance created by the numerous obstacles that the devotee might face, and which may cause harm to him or hinder his spiritual progress.

The Lord gives them all that they want; he provides the devotee with Moksha or final and ultimate liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation.

[On close examination, these three statements that the Lord removes all hurdles faced by the devotee, fulfils all his desires, and provides him with Moksha has another meaning. It is that the Lord takes upon him the responsibility of ensuring that the path of the devotee becomes smooth and easy, that he is not subjected to undue harshness and inconvenience, that all his basic needs are taken care of, and that he graduates to reach the spiritual destination of Mukti or Moksha even if he is not up to the expected mark or

standard. It is like the doting father taking care of his dear son and ensuring his comfort along with taking care of his future needs in life by giving him proper education and training. If the son is mentally not so smart, the loving father would take a little bit extra care of him as compared to another son who is of first-rate mental capabilities and able to fend for himself. Likewise, if the devotee is less than competent, the Lord holds him by the arm and helps him on along the path leading to Mukti. This is the benefit of following the path of Bhakti Yoga. When the devotee has surrendered himself to the Lord, when he is totally dependent upon the Lord for his well-being, it becomes the moral obligation of the Lord to take care of him. The devotee henceforth becomes carefree just like a child is in the care of its doting parents.]

As compared to this situation there is the other optional path that leads to Mukti, and it is the path of Niraalamba Yoga wherein the aspirant is left to fend for himself much like the case of an intelligent son who is left to fend for himself by the father who diverts all his attention to the less privileged son.

This is the simple reason why Bhakti Yoga is preferable to the other path of Niraalamba Yoga.]

In the absence of Bhakti for Lord Vishnu, even the exalted and learned Gods such as Brahma (the creator who had produced the Vedas which are repositories of knowledge) can not expect to find Mukti in millions of years or countless births.

Since there can be no 'Kaarya' (affect, development, action leading to some situation, some proceeding or transaction) without a corresponding 'Karaan' (an inspiration, a cause, reason or motive), it follows that without Bhakti (devotion for the Lord, the Supreme Being; or steady desire to obtain Mukti and Truth) there can be no Brahm-Gyan (knowledge or awareness of Brahm; Brahm-realisation) which is a synonym for 'Tattva Gyan' (knowledge of the essence, the Truth), along with its attendant Anand (or bliss) and Mukti (or spiritual liberation).

[In other words, Bhakti motivates the aspirant to move closer to his chosen and beloved deity to whom he is fully devoted and committed, which in this case is Adi-Narayan or Brahm. When he single-mindedly pursues his spiritual objective, he would discover all about this Brahm because he is determined to do so. He would be able to discover that the Lord whom the world has been searching elsewhere is secretly enshrined in his own subtle heart as the Atma, and that there is no need to make strenuous efforts and exert one self to meet this Lord. The Lord is available at all times even without observing any formalities and time limitations by simply turning inwards and meditating. Why would the man, who has discovered the priceless gem hidden in his own pocket, not exult in joy, exclaiming 'Eureka'. This is exactly what happens with the follower of Bhakti Yoga. He discovers Brahm, and this leads to his Mukti or Moksha much more easily and conveniently. It is Bhakti which is the cause of his attaining Mukti and Brahm-Gyan.

Hence, Bhakti is the 'Karaan', or the inspiring factor or the cause that leads to the spiritual aspirant attaining Mukti/Moksh. The attainment of Mukti or Moksha would be the effect or the result of having Bhakti. Similarly, Bhakti is also the motivating factor that inspires the aspirant to obtain Brahm-Gyan or knowledge of the truth and the reality of everything that is associated with the term 'Brahm' (the Supreme Being, the cosmic Consciousness, the supreme Atma known as the Parmatma) because he would like to

know more about the Lord whom he worships and adores so lovingly. This attainment of Brahm-Gyan would be the spontaneous effect, result, or the 'Kaarya' of Bhakti.]

Therefore, you (the disciple) should abandon all other methods and take the shelter of (i.e. adopt) Bhakti as the chosen path. Be diligent and steady in Bhakti. I (the teacher) repeat—adopt Bhakti as your chosen path, and be steady in it. All the 'Siddhis' (mystical powers and spiritual achievements) are easily and conveniently available by following the path of Bhakti. There is nothing that cannot be achieved or attained by Bhakti.' (14).

15. Hearing this profound discourse from his Guru, being acquainted with the glorious aspects and all the secrets of the Param Tattva (i.e. the supreme Truth about Brahm along with its many esoteric aspects, secrets and doctrines), removing all his doubts and setting to rest all causes of perplexities and confusions, and fully convinced and determined that he would now easily and very soon find Moksha (final liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation), the disciple got up, fully contented and fulfilled.

He performed circumambulation around the Guru, bowed before him with utmost respect and reverence, worshipped him properly, took the Guru's permission and achieved a matured state of existence with self and Brahm realisation. In other words, he obtained matured Vigyan or full fledged knowledge of the Truth and Brahm; he became highly enlightened and awakened.

The disciple soon transformed and became one like Lord Narayan himself when he gained this profound knowledge and enlightenment even without making much effort on his part (15).

16. Lord Maha Vishnu turned towards Brahma and said—'Oh Brahma! I have told you everything about the Param Tattva. One can find Moksha even by remembering it, by pondering over its profoundness and greatness. By pursuing it, everything that is unknown and secret becomes known and de-mystified.

That by knowing which even the most esoteric and mysterious becomes easily known and accessed, I have disclosed all about this 'Param Tattva' to you.' (16).

17. Brahma asked—'Who is a Guru¹?'

Maha Vishnu replied—'The Guru is a personified form of Lord Adi-Narayan. That Adi-Narayan is none but 'me'. [In this context, refer Canto 5, paragraph no. 11-12.]

Hence, you should take refuge in my holy feet only (instead of exploring so many other avenues for finding your spiritual destination). Be devoted to 'me', and be steady and firm in it. Worship me and meditate upon 'me'. In this way, you would attain 'me' (i.e. the Supreme Being; you would attain the holy stature of being truly Brahm-realised or reaching Brahm-hood).

Indeed, anything other than 'me'² is to be abandoned; it is a hindrance and an impediment in one's spiritual success, and attainment of glory and divinity. There is nothing except 'me' that is truthful and having any essence. [This is because anything except 'me' or 'I' is un-truth and therefore worth not paying any attention to by a wise man.]

It is 'me' who is a personification of eternal and extreme Anand (spiritual bliss, ecstasy, beatitude and felicity) that is unique and unmatched in this world.

It is 'me' who is complete in all respects.

It is 'me' who is the basis of everything in this creation; 'I' am the foundation that supports everything in this creation.

It is 'me' who am the 'Nirakar Param Brahm' (the formless and attribute-less supreme transcendental Brahm) that is beyond the reach and purview of the faculty of speech. [That is, words cannot describe 'me'.]

Not even an atom exists that is separate, different or distinct from 'me'. Or in other words, not a single atom or unit of creation can be said to have an existence that is not one of my countless forms.' (17).

[Note—¹Refer also to Canto 5, paragraph no. 11-12 of the present Upanishad. A detailed note on the concept of the Guru has been appended to paragraph no. 11 of Canto 5.

²The use of the pronoun 'me' in the light of what has already been said and explained in this Upanishad earlier, especially in paragraph no. 15, and about the Mahavakyas of paragraph nos. 5-6 of this Canto 8, it obviously follows that it applies to the 'true self' or the pure consciousness known as the Atma. This 'me' and 'I' become synonyms because they both mean the same Atma. In fact, it is only when the disciple has become self and Brahm realised and enlightened enough that his own Atma, and Brahm, the Parmatma, are the same entities, that he is eligible to declare that I have become one with the Parmatma—which is another way of saying that he has indeed obtained Moksha or Mukti. He has indeed obtained freedom from ignorance and delusions which have been the cause of all his spiritual problems till now.]

18. In this way, the creator and grandfather of creation, Lord Brahma, attained extreme Anand by becoming enlightened with this profound knowledge taught to him by Lord Maha Vishnu.

The Lord touched Brahma, and this touch had a magical effect upon the latter—Brahma instantly attained 'Dibya Gyan', i.e. he instantly became enlightened and realised, he obtained the sublime knowledge of the Divine ('Dibya Gyan'), and whatever doubts and confusions that had still lingered in his mind were instantaneously eliminated. [It is usually experienced in the realm of mysticism that enlightened souls sometimes do wonders by their mere touch and presence than attempting to teach through lectures and lengthy discourses. Herein lie the difference between a scholar and a mystic. While the former relies on the power of words and the dynamic strength inherent in knowledge and learning to transform the other man, the mystic achieves this quietly by transferring a part of his high-voltage spiritual powers, so to say, to the disciple by merely touching him or looking him into the eye, or even by smiling at him. To cite an example, while man-made electricity needs wires to be transmitted from one point to another, the heavenly electric current strikes the earth from the clouds high above in the form of a bolt of lightening which needs no wires, transformers, circuits and poles!]

Being thus enlightened and spiritually empowered, the great grandfather Brahma rose and performed circumambulation of Lord Maha Vishnu, his Guru, bowed before the Lord most reverentially, and offered his respects and worship in various ways. Then Brahma brought his palms together as a gesture of submission and went closer to Vishnu.

Brahma submitted most politely and prayerfully before Lord Maha Vishnu, ‘Oh Lord! Bless me with steady and sturdy Bhakti; bless me that I become firm in Bhakti, and nothing can ever sway me away from it. Oh the merciful Lord! I am inseparable from you (because I and you are ‘one’). Please be kind to protect me, and give your succour to me in every way possible.’ (18).

19. [Lord Maha Vishnu blessed Brahma, exclaiming—] ‘Let it be so, oh holy soul! Let it be as you wish, oh blessed soul!’

Being extremely pleased with Brahma, and blessing and lauding him in the above manner, Lord Maha Vishnu said—‘My devotee and worshipper becomes excellent and most exalted. All things, all situations and all living beings are made holy and auspicious by my ‘Upaasanaa’—i.e. by offering me worship with due devotion, by offering service to me and seeking my intercession, by paying homage to me, by praying to me. My devotee is able to conquer all by his ‘Upaasanaa’ for me.

A person who is my devotee and worships me, who offers prayers to me and serves me, who adores me and honours me, is shown due respect by all in society; he is honoured by all.

All his (spiritual) bondages are completely broken; he is freed from all fetters that had been shackling him (to this material world, and its attendant torments and delusions) till the time he had not taken my shelter and sought my blessing and intercession, till the time he has not prayed to me and worshipped me.

A righteous, noble and holy man is willingly served by all other men in this world. Similarly, all the Gods also feel privileged to serve (help, oblige) him and be benevolent towards him.

Even personified form of all the grand virtues and qualities, such as all forms of glories, magnificence, fame and majesty, too serve him.

My ardent devotee and sincere worshipper is transformed into the ‘Advaitya Paramanand Brahm’. [That is, he is overwhelmed with supreme Anand (spiritual bliss, ecstasy, beatitude and felicity) that is undiluted, purest in form, and one of its only kind, an Anand which comes with realisation of the supreme Brahm, or which comes automatically when one becomes self-realised and Brahm-realised. Such an enlightened man is equivalent to the supreme Brahm himself, and this establishment of uniformity and non-duality between his ‘self’ and the cosmic ‘Self’ makes him a living image of Brahm.]

Any spiritual aspirant who follows this path in a comprehensive manner is able to become an image of ‘Paramanand Brahm’—i.e. he becomes an image of supremely blissful Brahm (19).

20. Anyone who diligently studies this Maha-Narayan Upanishad belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition that reveals the secrets of the ‘Param Tattva’—i.e. that teaches the most esoteric secrets of spiritualism and metaphysics, is able to free himself from great sins and their evil and negative consequences.

He is absolved from all the sins and their horrible effects, whether they were done willingly or done inadvertently. Verily, he is freed from even the greatest of sins and their evil effects.

He is freed from all sins—whether they were done secretly, or done openly, or done in great intensity over a long period of time.

He is able to vanquish or obtain victory over all the Lokas (worlds).

He is able to develop devotion and dedication for all the Mantras, and inculcate faith in their great powers and potentials. [This happens because he realises that all the Mantras are essentially meant to honour Brahm who is a non-dual and divine Supreme Being who has assumed so many forms simply to carry out varying functions in this creation. He realises that the Mantras are nothing but the different ways of addressing the same Divinity, the same Brahm revealed as so many Gods and Goddesses to whom these individual Mantras are dedicated.]

He becomes well versed in and is deemed to have developed a deep insight into all the esoteric doctrines, profound tenets and mystical philosophies of the Vedas and the Upanishads, thereby becoming a knowledgeable and wise person in the field of spiritualism and metaphysics.

He is deemed to have become a fulfilled or fully contented consumer or enjoyer of all things worth consuming and enjoying. [A man wishes to enjoy this and that object in this world because he is unsatisfied with his current situation. He seems to think, so to say, that the drink in the other person's cup is sweeter and fresher than his own, and this notion perpetuates constant hunger or thirst for more and more of this world. But when he becomes self-realised, he has tasted that unique nectar of bliss and happiness which has no match anywhere in this world. After this experience he would not like to taste anything else. Thus, when an aspirant becomes Brahm-realised he feels satisfied and fully contented so much so that no temptations of the world would be strong enough to ever make him feel distracted, falter or dither from his chosen path. He remains submerged in an eternal ocean of spiritual blissfulness and ecstasy, and never bothers to think of any other kind of material enjoyments and comforts.]

He is deemed to have acquired the knowledge of all types of Yogas. [Yoga provides Anand or bliss to its practitioner, and its main aim is spiritual liberation and deliverance. When a wise person, who has properly understood the teaching of this Upanishad, is able to experience this Anand first hand, when he has become self-and-Brahm-realised, and has thereby obtained spiritual liberation and deliverance, he is deemed to have attained the same knowledge and enlightenment, called 'Gyan', that comes by doing Yoga and Dhyan, or meditation, contemplation and deep research.]

Since he has become one like Lord Maha Vishnu himself, he is deemed to have acquired special mystical powers that empower him to help others in their spiritual endeavours by showing them the correct path and giving them wise advice.

Indeed, he becomes a personification of 'Advaitya Paramanand Brahm'. [Refer paragraph no. 19.] (20).

21. This secret about the 'Param Tattva' (the supreme essence and the great truth about spiritualism) must not be told or divulged or taught to anyone who is not devoted to his Guru, who does not wish to hear it, who is a non-believer (an atheist or an agnostic) and is devoid of Tapa (i.e. who has no control over his sense organs, who is indulgent and lacks the virtue of self-restraint), who is boastful, arrogant and ostentatious, who has no devotion and respect for me, who has the negative quality of being malicious, jealous,

and keeping ill-will against others, and who is so ungrateful and thankless that he finds fault with even 'me' (Lord Vishnu) who am so merciful and benevolent towards all (21).

22. On the contrary, anyone who tells, teaches or reveals this profound knowledge to my devotees (so that they can become enlightened about) will be rewarded by greater devotion for me, and become more steadfast in my service, being specially empowered blessed by me. Ultimately, he will attain me. [In other words, I will treat him as my apostle and ensure that he is never far from me, and I am always with him.]

Anyone who attentively hears and studies the secret implications of this conversation between the two of us, i.e. between Brahma and Maha Vishnu as revealed in this Upanishad, would become firmly established in the knowledge and glory of Brahm.

Anyone who hears and studies this conversation between us with firm belief and faith, without harbouring doubts and skepticism, would be able to find Sayujya Mukti— i.e. would be able to attain a divine stature whereby he becomes one like me by merging his self into my divine and cosmic form as the Supreme Being known as Brahm.' (22).

23. Then Lord Maha Vishnu vanished from sight. After that, Brahma went to his own abode (in the Brahma-loka) (23).

24. In the above manner, the esoteric and eclectic form of Mukti known as 'Sayujya' has been outlined in the Maha-Narayan Upanishad. Amen! (24).

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(V—C) Annapurna Upanishad (Canto 1)

Since the focus of our current book is on the theme of "Yoga", hence only Canto 1 is quoted here. Even here, special attention is to be focused on verse nos. 28, 48-51 that deal with Yoga.

The Annapurna Upanishad is a fairly long one with five Cantos having a total of three hundred thirty-seven verses. It is a dialogue between sage Nidagh, the ascetic disciple who wished to know how to obtain spiritual liberation and deliverance, and sage Ribhu, the enlightened one and the most exalted amongst those sages who were Brahm-realised.

This Upanishad is a brilliant exposition on the philosophy of Advaitya Vedanta, the eclectic philosophy of non-duality, and it focuses on the Atma, the pure conscious 'self', the realisation of which is true and real Mukti (spiritual liberation and deliverance of the creature) from all the fetters having their origin in delusions and ignorance. Since this Atma is no other entity but the supreme Consciousness of creation known as Brahm, the Upanishad emphasizes that to be truly enlightened, wise and learned one must be self-realised and Brahm-realised simultaneously. In fact there is no difference between these two divine states of existences. The Upanishad describes how a fully self-realised and enlightened person feels, how he experiences a profound sense of blessedness when he has truly understood the Atma (the pure consciousness) and other spiritual Truths.

The Upanishad derives its name ‘Annapurna’ from the fact that it opens with the praises of Goddess Annapurna, the divine Shakti or the majestic power of the Supreme Being which provides nourishment to all, in the form of an invocation or introductory. The Mantra dedicated to Annapurna was divulged to sage Ribhu by his father, and it has twenty-seven letters. Ribhu had worshipped Goddess Annapurna persistently day after day using this Mantra, and she finally appeared before him to bless him and grant him the boon of ‘self knowledge’, or the divine and eclectic knowledge pertaining to the Atma, the pure consciousness. This made sage Ribhu ‘self’ and ‘Brahm’ realised, most fulfilled and attained soul.

Goddess Annapurna is none other than Goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu, the sustainer, nourisher and protector of this creation. It is Laxmi who fulfills all the desires of the creature and provides him with nourishment and welfare in this world. Hence she is honoured as ‘Annapurna’—literally one who fills the granary and provides food to this world. She represents the dynamic powers of the Supreme Being by which he takes care of this creation.

This Upanishad is an elaborate discourse on the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta—or the principles of non-duality, and how a wise and enlightened aspirant gains true knowledge and attains the state of true liberation and deliverance from all the spiritual fetters that tie down an ordinary creature to this gross world and an equally gross body. During its long rambling discourse, the text describes and explains many relevant spiritual and metaphysical topics, such as for instance the concept of various states of existences (such as Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupta, Turiya and Turiya-teet), the concept of ‘Bhrama’ (delusion and misconception about any given thing or situation; spiritual delusions), of what constitutes the various ‘Sankalps’, ‘Vasanas’ and ‘Vrittis’ (worldly volitions, passions and inherent mental tendencies brought to this life from the previous life) that a creature harbours in his inner self, and how to overcome them, the concept of ‘Mano-naash’ (conquering the mind and the sub-conscious and their stabilization as well as dissolution through diligent practice), of ‘Sanyas’ (the life of renunciation and detachment), of ‘Jivan Mukta’ (to be spiritually liberated even while alive and having a gross body), of ‘Videha Mukti’ (to be spiritually liberated without the interference of the physical gross body), of how to overcome the various faults and temptations of this world, of what is really meant by the various names that are assigned to the basically indivisible and uniform ‘sky element’ known as the ‘Akash’ (such as the subtle forms of the sky known as Ghatakash or the sky present inside an empty pot, Mathakash or the space within the walls of a monastery etc), and many other such important topics that any student of metaphysics must be well conversant with.

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Canto 1

1. OM Salutations! The sage named Nidagh, who was an acclaimed Yogi (an ascetic well-versed in the principle and practice of Yoga or meditation), approached another sage named Ribhu¹, an attained soul who had become ‘self-realised’ and ‘Brahm-realised’, and was considered as the most exalted sage of his time, and reverentially prostrated in front of him to pay his respects.

Having shown his respects to Ribhu, Nidagh got up and stood in front of him once again (1).

[Note—Sage *Ribhu* and his disciple *Nidagh*—These two sages were known as Paramhans as they were highly wise, erudite, enlightened, self-realised and Brahm-realised. This fact has been asserted in the Brihajjabal Upanishad, Brahman 7, verse no. 3.

Sage Ribhu is said to be one of the several mind-born sons of the creator Brahma. With this gene running in his blood, he was by nature wise, enlightened and self-realised, but in order to conform to established traditions he took initiation from his elder brother Sanatkumar who was himself one of the mind-born sons of Brahma. Ribhu was renunciation personified, was unpretentious and free from all shortcomings and blemishes that tainted others in Brahma's creation. His only attire was his own skin, and he lived in a thatched hut.

It is believed that his first disciple was sage Nidagh who was the son of the great sage Pulastya. It so happened that once Ribhu, during his wanderings, came to the hermitage of Nidagh and saw that he was studying and chanting the hymns of the Vedas. Ribhu felt very pitiful for him and advised him that if one did not know or understand the essence of what the Vedas preach, if he did not come to know the Absolute and the Truth and become self-realised, then all this study is an exercise in futility. Thereafter Nidagh accepted his discipleship and learnt from sage Ribhu the intricacies of the esoteric knowledge of the Atma and Brahm.

Under the instructions of his Guru Ribhu, Nidagh accepted the life of a householder, married and established his hermitage on the banks of river Devika. After a long time, Ribhu remembered his disciple and wished to see him, and thus came to his hermitage. Nidagh could not recognize him, though he welcomed the guest with the greatest of respect and fed him. After meals, Nidagh asked Ribhu whether he was satisfied with the meal, who he was, where did he come from, and where he was going.

Then Ribhu preached him—'Oh son! I am not the body or the Pran (life forces living inside the body) that gets fed or feels quenched of hunger or thirst. The 'self' or the Atma is as eternal, infinite, all-pervading and omnipresent as the sky, so there is no question of it coming from anywhere and going anywhere. All these mundane aspects of creation—to be satisfied or not, to come and go—are related to the ever-changing 'untruth', so do not repost any trust and faith on such things that are transient, unsteady and fickle. Don't be wasting your precious life and time in delusions, hallucinating and swinging between this and that. Instead, become uniform and steady on the Truth which is itself uniform, steady, unchallengeable, unequivocal and irrefutable. Concentrate upon your Atma, the pure 'conscious self'.' Nidagh recognized his Guru, was overwhelmed with gratitude, and fell down on his august feet in surrender. This same idea was elucidated by sage Durvasa to the Gopis (milkmaids who accompanied Lord Krishna in his childhood days at Vrindavan) that forms the text of the Gopal Uttar Tapini Upnaishad of the Atharva Veda tradition.

After another long spell of time, the Guru once again decided to visit his disciple. When Ribhu reached the hermitage he found there was a great procession passing on the road and Nidagh was waiting patiently to let the procession pass so that he can cross the road. On enquiry he told Ribhu—who he could not recognize again—that the king of Virpur was passing through. Ribhu wished to rekindle the fire of enlightenment in his disciple, so he asked Nidagh—'Say, who is that king in this melee?' Ribhu replied that he was sitting on the biggest elephant. Ribhu asked him to point out some characteristic feature so that he can distinguish between the king and the elephant from a distance. At this seemingly stupid and impertinent question, Nidagh pushed Ribhu down and mounted on his back, saying—'Now, I am the king and you are that elephant'. The wise teacher was unperturbed, and asked to point out the difference between them—i.e. how has he

(Nidagh) become a king, and how come the man he is riding upon has become an elephant. Shocked beyond belief, Nidagh suddenly realised that the man was no one else but his revered Guru Ribhu. He fell at the enlightened teacher's feet and asked for forgiveness. Ever so merciful and kind as Ribhu was, he not only pardoned his disciple but preached him the fact that the external body is not the true identity of the creature, and that to recognize someone based on this physical gross feature is the most ignorant and stupid thing to do, something not expected from a so-called learned man of the Vedas. So, finally Nidagh realised the futility of studying the Vedas without understanding the principle enshrined in their tenets. Thereafter, Nidagh finally found his spiritual liberation and deliverance, and though he lived in this world like another man, but henceforth he lived as a 'Jivan Mukta'—i.e. a person who is freed from the fetters of the world and the body inspite of living in this gross material world and having a physical body that is equally gross. Such a self-realised man is totally detached and unconcerned about both of them—i.e. the body as well as the world. When the proper time comes, such persons find 'Videha Mukti'—i.e. they shed their mortal body even without being aware of it being shed, and merge their 'self' with the supreme Self, the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, never to take birth again. This is because at the instant enlightenment dawns upon them, they stop being associated with any of the deeds done by the body, and remain absolutely neutral. Therefore no consequences of deeds done and actions taken by them by their physical gross body accumulate as far as their true self is concerned, and they do not have to take a re-birth to go through the process of either enjoying or suffering from these consequences.

Coming back to the story of Ribhu, when this news reached Sanatkumar, the Guru of Ribhu, he was extremely pleased and impressed, and to commemorate this occasion and to immortalize this unique virtue of forgiveness, he added the first letter 'Ksha' (pronounced as a combined utterance of the letter 'Ka' and 'Cha') of the word 'Kshamaa', meaning 'forgiveness' in the Sanskrit language, to Ribhu's name. Thus, henceforth Ribhu came to be known as 'Ribhuksha' (Ribhu + Ksha). Since Ribhuksha was ever in a blissful mood, the word of bliss and ecstasy, viz. 'Anand' was appended to his name, and it finally became 'Ribhukshaanand' (Ribhu + Ksha + Anand).

The great metaphysical preaching of sage Ribhu for the benefit of Nidagh also appear in Tejobindu Upanishad, Cantos 5-6 as well as in Varaaha Upanishad, Cantos 4-5 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, and in Maho-panishad, Canto 5 of the Sam Veda tradition.]

2. Sage Nidagh most respectfully asked sage Ribhu questions pertaining to 'Atma-Tattva', i.e. regarding the fundamental truth and essence, the 'Tattva', about the esoteric and enigmatic entity known as the 'Atma', the consciousness that is the pure 'self' of the living being¹.

Thus, Nidagh asked sage Ribhu, 'Oh Lord! Please enlighten me about the knowledge of the 'Atma-tattva', and preach me about it in detail. By worshipping whom did you acquire this knowledge of Brahm? [That is, how did you become self-realised and Brahm-realised? It ought to be noted here that there is no difference between the knowledge of the Atma and that of Brahm because both the divine entities are 'consciousness' personified, the former at the microcosmic level and the latter at the microcosmic level of creation.] (2).

[Note—¹The word 'Atma' means 'soul'. This word 'soul' itself implies the essence and fundamental basis of anything. It refers to the 'actual and absolute truth' that is hidden behind the external façade of falsehood, or even the 'apparent truth' that is only illusionary and misconceived. In the context of metaphysics, this 'truth' is the Atma, the soul of the creature, because sans this soul the creature has no meaning. There would be

no life on this planet earth if there was no living soul here; dead bodies do not have any meaning and relevance in the context of life and creation. Hence, if there is any truth in 'life' it is the pure conscious entity known as the Atma, and not the gross body or the equally gross world which is pith-less and lifeless. Sage Ribhu was well-versed in this knowledge of the Atma as he was preached on it by none other but Brahma, the creator of the Vedas which are epitomes of pristine pure philosophy pertaining to the Absolute Truth of creation known as Brahm, and which in turn is pure Consciousness personified in the form of the Atma.]

3. Please be graceful enough to give this divine and eclectic knowledge to me, the grand knowledge that is at once spiritually liberating and enlightening, that is capable of providing emancipation, salvation and deliverance to the one who has acquired it, and which blesses the person who possesses it with an exalted stature, auspiciousness, majesty, glorious virtues and mystical powers.

[This knowledge is empowering and enabling for the creature as it not only entitles him for obtaining the exalted stature of one who is wise and enlightened but also provides him with the fruits of self-realisation that leads to his spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. It makes the creature acquainted with the ultimate and absolute Truth of creation, and this knowledge itself would make him stand out from the crowd, thereby bestowing unmatched honour and respect upon him.]'

Sage Ribhu was overwhelmed and felt obliged to preach. He blessed Nidagh and said, 'Oh Nidagh, be blessed! Listen this eternal knowledge from me with due attention (3).

4-5. You would be liberated and delivered by having this knowledge (i.e. by understanding it and implementing it).

[Now, Goddess Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity who is also known as Annapurna as she provides all the necessities of life, is being invoked in the following verses. Sage Ribhu had acquired the grand and eclectic spiritual knowledge of the Atma by worshipping Goddess Annapurna, and so he prays to her first before proceeding ahead with his discourse for the benefit of sage Nidagh. This is also the reason why this Upanishad is named after this Goddess—it is to honour her and to emphasize the point that the knowledge contained in it was revealed by Goddess Annapurna as her blessing for sage Ribhu as made clear in verse nos. 8-12 of this Canto 1.]

She is the adornment of the Naad¹, the Bindu² and the Kalaa³. In other words, she is the center of authority and power that gives these entities their importance and value. These three entities acquire their importance because they personify or embody certain glorious virtues of Goddess Annapurna [4.]

She is an image of eternal blissfulness and cheerfulness.

She has no support, and neither needs any.

[In other words, she is self-sustaining and self-supporting. She does not need any other prop to help her be established and gain majesty, magnificence, power and authority. In fact, she gives support to the rest of the world. From the practical point of view this means that Goddess Laxmi provides the world with all the requisites necessary for a happy and prosperous life; she takes care for the world's need for material wealth and prosperity so that the creature is well fed, nourished and looked after. Hence, she is

called 'Annapurna'—the one who replenishes food stock and other essential necessities of life.]

She has a pleasant and charming countenance, and equally pleasant and charming demeanours. She is famous with beautiful plaits or locks of hairs on her head. She looks exceptionally graceful, majestic and beautiful in this image.

She is known as 'Maha-Laxmi', the great Goddess of wealth, prosperity, well-being and all-round welfare.

[It ought to be noted here that Laxmi serves the creation by providing it with all its necessities of life, to make it comfortable and livable. But this applies to the material level of existence. The real and truthful welfare and well-being of the creature lies elsewhere—it lies in his spiritual well-being and welfare, it lies in his internal peace and tranquility, it lies in his ability to find true bliss and real happiness, in finding freedom from the miseries and torments associated with the gross body and remaining yoked to the continuous cycle of birth and death. Similarly, the real and truthful asset of the creature lies in the realisation of the Atma and the 'self' because this is a permanent and stable asset which is eternal and imperishable by its inherent nature, and therefore its accompanying bliss, ecstasy and contentedness is equally stable, eternal and imperishable as opposed to that obtained from the material things of the world as they are perishable, transient, ever-changing and illusionary like the world itself. Therefore, the same Goddess would provide the creature with worldly objects of his choice and majesty if he so wishes, and with spiritual majesty and glory if this is his wish. This is why the enlightened sage Ribhu worshipped Goddess Maha-Laxmi—he wished a special boon of spiritual wisdom and enlightenment as he understood the stupendous importance of this eclectic divine knowledge as he was the son of Brahma, the creator, and had the latter's genes running in him. Since Laxmi is the goddess in charge of the Lord's treasury, whether of material goods or of spiritual assets, it was appropriate for Ribhu to approach her because she had the 'key', she knew the right path and means to achieve what Ribhu wanted. Goddess Maha Laxmi could unlock the treasury of priceless wisdom, knowledge and enlightenment that Ribhu sought. Thus, we must see 'Laxmi' in this latter form in the context of this Upanishad.]

She enhances or stokes or ignites the internal passions and desires for more in the creature.

[Again, this stanza should be interpreted in the proper and correct context of what has been said in the preceding note. Goddess Laxmi stands for material wealth and prosperity, and their accompanying comforts, pleasures and joys as well as power, fame, pelf and authority. These things have no end, and the more a man has them the more he wants. It is rare and virtually impossible to be satisfied with them. This is what is implied here. The prefix 'Maha' meaning 'great or grand' serves to heighten the gravity of this situation—i.e. it indicates that the numerous passions, desires and yearnings that a man has for the world and its material sense objects are formidable forces to reckon with, and if one wishes spiritual enlightenment and has liberation and deliverance as the goal of his life then he would first have to conquer this fort.]

She is an image of kindness, graciousness, courteousness, politeness and sobriety.

[Although the Goddess presides over a formidable treasury of material wealth and prosperity, and similarly though she holds the key to spiritual wealth, knowledge and enlightenment, she is still not haughty, arrogant, wild, egoist and proud, but is the most

benevolent and extremely gracious Goddess who looks after all the needs of this world, and therefore has countless creatures begging for her grace, kindness, benevolence, largesse and mercy. In spite of her powers, authority, majesty and grandeur, she is still humble, polite and graceful. She has no sense of ego and pride in her cosmic overriding powers, authority, majesty and grandeur.] [5.] (4-5).

[Note—¹⁻²Naad and Bindu—The word *Bindu* ordinarily refers to a ‘dot’ placed on the top of a Sanskrit alphabet to produce the nasal sound of a resonating ‘N’ or of ‘M’—as in *ring* or *rim*. It is equivalent to the reverberations of primordial sound created at the beginning of creation, and from which the rest of the subtle forms of sound were generated. It is called *Naad* in this context of creation. Therefore, the Naad is the cosmic sound of creation. It is represented by the dish-like sign placed below the dot on the top of a letter to represent the crucible of creation.

The Naad and Bindu are collectively called the ‘Chandra Bindu’. It is a sign resembling a concave crucible or shallow plate over which is placed a dot at its focal point. It is a ‘moon-like spot’ and hence called the ‘Chandra’ (moon) ‘Bindu’ (a dot). It is a nasal sound equivalent to the letter ‘N’ as in the words *can’t*, *mount*, *taint* or *taunt*. The Moon is regarded as the heavenly pitcher of Amrit, the elixir of life and the ambrosial fluid of eternity and bliss. The Bindu is a drop of this Amrit. Hence, in metaphysics the term Chandra Bindu is used to refer to the supreme transcendental Brahm and the spiritual state of realisation of pure conscious ‘self’ when the aspirant enjoys bliss and experiences a surge of ecstasy. This is a metaphoric way of saying that he tastes Amrit dripping from the Moon.

The concept of *Bindu* (a ‘dot’ or a ‘drop’) and *Naad* (the cosmic ‘sound’) have a close association with the concept of OM (the ethereal word representing the supreme transcendental Brahm) and its iconographic depiction as a symbol in the form of the sixth alphabet of the Sanskrit language, i.e. the long vowel sound ‘Ooo’ as in ‘boot or root’. Amongst the various Upanishads that describe this concept are Naad Bindu, Dhyana Bindu, Tejo Bindu and Yogshikha (Canto 3, verse nos. 2-11).

This monosyllabic word OM actually consists of three letters when analysed—viz. A, U and M. The letter ‘A’ stands for the origin of creation, the letter ‘U’ signifies the development and expansion of this creation, while the letter ‘M’ stands for conclusion. Other metaphysical connotations of these three letters have been elaborately described in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 74-79 and Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 6, verse nos. 3-10 of Sam Veda.

This OM is a representative of the supreme transcendental divine entity known as Brahm which predates this existence and lasts even after this world is concluded. In fact, this creation would fall back to merge into this Brahm and re-emerge from it at the time of a new beginning much like waves in an ocean rising and falling into the water again and again. This Brahm is in a neutral, a-dynamic and attribute-less state in the period before the process of creation began. Then when the time came for the creation to come forth, energy and necessary strength and relevant power were needed. This is called ‘Shakti’ aspect of Brahm which was inherent to Brahm but in a latent form. The ‘point’ whereby this Brahm revealed his Shakti is called a ‘Bindu’. It is also like a ‘drop’ of the cosmic sperm emerging from the cosmic Purush, the invisible Father of creation, which contain all the necessary energy, strength, vigour and vitality needed to initiate the process of creation. Hence, Bindu is Brahm’s ‘Shakti’ aspect; it represents the ‘dynamic principle of Brahm’. In Tantra literature, Brahm is treated as Shiva, and his energy is called a Shakti represented by the Bindu. Since OM is a symbol for Brahm, this Shakti was put on top of this symbol in iconography to depict this fact in visual term.

Now came the revelation of this Shakti—and that was done in the form of Naad, the ‘cosmic sound’. Since only the invisible ether was present in the beginning, this Shakti caused a ripple in it which spread in the form of waves. Waves have kinetic energy and this set in ‘motion’ the process of creation. Modern science has shown that the origin of this universe was in a Big Bang, and this means that there was a ‘single point’ where this ‘explosive bang’ occurred—a clear reference to the concept of a ‘Bindu’ (point) and its accompanying ‘Naad’ (sound). It was from this Bindu that the cosmic debris spread out by the force of this explosion to distant corners of the available space to act as nuclei for the umpteen numbers of planets and star systems that would eventually evolve to form the universe as we know of it today.

Since Bindu was the energy of Brahm that was not visible, it is therefore the unmanifest dynamic force of Brahm and very closely associated with the latter; it is a part of Brahm. The Naad is a revealed form of this Shakti as it is the cosmic sound which can be actually heard. Since Naad had its origin in Brahm and is a manifested form of the stupendous energy contained in an un-manifested form in the Bindu, it is constantly associated with them much like the electromagnetic waves (Naad) of a radio broadcasting station, the speaker (Brahm, the consciousness) who broadcasts the news and the transmitter tower (the Bindu) are inseparable from one another.

The concept of ‘Bindu’ and ‘Naad’ can be understood in another plane also. The cosmic process of creation needed the injection of a cosmic sperm to initiate the process of the creation of the cosmic embryo. This sperm would come from the cosmic Father, i.e. Brahm. Brahm in the context of metaphysical interpretation of creation would be the ‘causal body of the cosmos’ because it is the ‘cause’ of it all. The ‘drop’ of sperm ejaculated by this Father (Brahm) had the stupendous creative power and energy that provided the necessary spark. The word ‘Naad’, in addition to its conventional meaning of ‘sound’, also means a big open concave ‘bowl or dish or crucible’ for storing liquid, which in the context of creation meant the cosmic womb of Nature. So, when the cosmic Father (Brahm) dropped one ‘drop’ of his sperm (Bindu) into the crucible (Naad), the cosmic conception was affected and the process was initiated. From this conception there emerged the Hiranyagarbha, the yellow egg of the cosmos, which in terms of Vedanta would be the macrocosmic ‘subtle body’ of creation. When this cosmic egg matured, the macrocosmic gross body emerged in the form of the Viraat Purush.

The stupendous and astounding powers that Brahm inherently possesses are highlighted in the context of the most fascinating, majestic and magnificently wondrous world it has created using its own energy called Shakti. Had this creation not been in existence, the powers of Brahm would not have come to the fore. In other words, the active principle of Brahm is revealed in the form of the Shakti.

Since the Bindu is regarded as the Shakti principle of Brahm in Tantra literature because it is this principal point from where the primary form of active and dynamic Brahm started to reveal its self in the form of Naad, it is likened to the ‘fire element’. The Naad itself is sound and the latter needs the medium of ether to travel as waves and spread in all the directions. Therefore, Naad is likened to the ‘wind element’.

For the purpose of Yoga practice, the Bindu is depicted as the dot present on the top of the symbol of Naad, i.e. the sixth Sanskrit alphabet ‘Ooo’, symbolising the focal point in the cosmic bowl from where this sound is generated and where the mind is supposed to be focused during meditation so that Naad can be heard. The location of this Bindu in the body is the center of the two eyebrows where a practitioner of Yoga is supposed to focus his attention during meditation.

The Naad is the cosmic sound heard by an ascetic when he is in deep meditation mode. As any sound originates from a source and then radiates out in the form of waves much like ripples created on the surface of a calm lake when a stone is thrown in it, the

Naad has its cosmic origin in the one-point source of sound energy called Bindu that has Brahm as its principal base.

From the perspective of the meaning of Naad as 'sound' we can have the following interpretation—all sounds have a 'point' of origin, the Bindu of origin. From this point source the sound waves spread out in waves in the ether present in space at the macro level of creation, and in the air in the immediate surrounding space at the micro level of creation. It can be compared to ripples arising on the surface of a calm lake when a stone is thrown on it. 'Energy' waves are created from the 'point' of impact and spread out in concentric layers just like the waves of sound travel in ether. This example would prove why and how the origin of Naad was envisioned in the Bindu (dot) by the ancient sage who had first visualized it.

The Bindu means a 'point source', and Naad refers to the 'un-manifest energy in the form of sound' that radiated out in the cosmic ether from this point source. Therefore, the Bindu would refer to the passive Brahm and the Naad would mean in this context the dynamic and active energy of this Brahm radiating out from this point source to all the directions of creation.

This Bindu or dot is the focal point from which the cosmic Naad or sound originated when the process of creation first started in what the modern science recognizes as the 'Big Bang'. This sound spread to all corners of the cosmos. The human skull is also slightly concave from the inner side, and the brain is located just below it. The implication is very obvious—this Bindu or 'dot' generated the cosmic Naad which is heard by the ascetic when he focuses his entire concentration in the head by diverting all his senses away from the external world and fixing their attention on one point in the head, called the Agya Chakra or still higher up in the Brahm Randhra Chakra.

It is just like fine tuning the antenna of the modern satellite discs used in television reception. The reverberation and vibrations caused by this cosmic Naad is very overwhelming for the ascetic and he literally drowns in its sound. The vibrations massage his nerves and relaxes them; he feels a sense of extreme ecstasy and bliss due to this, and that is comparable to the one obtained at the time of ejaculation of sperm during intercourse—hence the reference to the male phallus and the semen dripping from it. There is no vulgarity in this explanation. This citation is used to give a physical and verifiable idea of the extent of bliss and ecstasy obtained when the ascetic reaches the climax of Yoga so that he can hear the Naad.

This is also why this condition is compared to the 'cosmic union' of Shiva representing Brahm and his own energy personified as Shakti which produced this sound energy called Naad in the ethereal space of the cosmos. It was Brahm's ecstasy and bliss of self-realisation that produced a cosmic vibration which in turn set in motion the process of creation. According to Vedanta, Shiva is known as Brahm, while this Shakti is known as Maya. According to the Sankhya philosophy, this Shakti is called Prakriti in the context of Brahm who is called Purush here.

In Tantra worship, Bindu is regarded as Shakti, the dynamic aspect of Shiva, and the Peeth is the seat of this Shakti. There is another way at looking at these two words—Bindu represents the cosmic sperm which represents the dynamic energy, potentials and powers of Shiva, and the Peeth would then be the seat of this Shiva energy, i.e. the base of the Shakti.

Naad is a form of cosmic sound, and this sound is a form of energy created by vibrations in ether. In other words, during the process of Yoga, when the vital winds, especially the Apan wind is made to activate the Mooladhar Chakra by literally vibrating or shaking it into action, the latent energy trapped inside it is activated to produce the sound much like striking of the tuning fork produces sound in a school physics laboratory.

This is another interesting analogy. The seed is round and small—almost like a Bindu or dot—when compared to the huge tree that it would produce. The sprout is like a Lingam or phallus coming out of it. [Refer Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 3.]

The Naad or cosmic sound that is physically heard during Yoga is a manifestation of the dynamic forces or Shakti of Brahm, the energy present in this Naad is that dynamic force or Shakti itself. Taking a parallel from the physical world, the Naad is like the eye of the body but the eye function only because it has the energy to do so and has been empowered by the faculty of sight to see. In other words, the ascetic sees this living world characterized by the presence of sound as a revelation of Brahm who is universally and uniformly present throughout it in an imperceptible and subtle form. The fact that ‘sound characterizes this world as living as opposite to being dead’ is proved by the fact that there is utter silence in a morgue or grave yard whereas there is hustle and bustle of life in a busy city. For all practical purposes of Yoga as described in the Yogshiksha Upanishad, this Naad and its subtle energy called Pashyanti is located in the Mooladhar Chakra. [Refer Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 178, Canto 3, verse nos. 2-3.]

The Param Hans Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, in its paragraph no. 6 describes that the Bindu represents the fifth Matra or aspect of Brahm having a total of sixteen Matras. The ‘Bindu’ is equivalent to the ‘Swapna-Vishwa’ form of Brahm that exists in the first of the four subtle or secondary states in which the consciousness exists during its ‘Swapna’ or dreaming state of existence in this world.

The same Param Hans Upanishad goes on to say in the same paragraph no. 6 that the Naad represents the sixth Matra or aspect of Brahm having a total of sixteen Matras. The ‘Naad’ is equivalent to the ‘Swapna-Taijas’ form of Brahm that exists in the second of the four subtle states in which the consciousness exists during its ‘Swapna’ or dreaming state of existence in this world.

The concept of *Naad and Bindu* has been explained at length in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 105, 167, 178; Canto 2, verse no. 6; Canto 3, verse nos. 2-3, 11; Canto 4, verse no. 47; Canto 5, verse no. 28; and Canto 6, verse nos. 48-49, 71-73.

The *relationship between Naad and Bindu* has been elucidated in great detail in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 178, Canto 3, verse nos. 3, 11, and Canto 4, verse no. 47.

The *relationship between the Bindu, Naad and the Mana* has been described in *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 178, Canto 6, verse nos. 71-73.

Naad Shakti or the majestic, dynamic and profound mystical and spiritual energy, powers and potentials of Naad have been expounded in *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 105, 178, Canto 6, verse nos. 21, 48, 72.

The *Bindu Shakti* or the majestic mystical energy and spiritual potentials of the point-source from where the cosmic Naad is envisioned to have had its origin has been described in *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 6, verse nos. 49, 71, 73.

³The word *Kalaa* has a wide application and briefly it refers to a particular aspect or position or condition or situation of any entity. It is indicative of this entity’s deeds which has led it into the present position or situation. It also refers to the special qualities, attributes, virtues, strengths, powers and potentials possessed by it. Other connotations include—(a) shape, form, contours of a thing; (b) special qualities, art, craft, skills, expertise, attributes etc. that one possesses; the shades or aspects of one’s overall personality; (c) a division, portion, fraction, phase or degree; (d) brilliance, magnificence and grandeur; (e) maverick and supernatural powers possessed by an entity.

The *16 Kalaas or aspects or facets of creation* have been expressly listed in the *Prashna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 6, verse no. 4. These

sixteen Kalaas are also called the *sixteen Aakarshini Shaktis* of creation that makes the possessor of these virtues much sought after in society. The word 'Aakarshini' means one that attracts others, and the word 'Shakti' of course means power. These 16 Kalaas are the following—(i) Pran (life; life consciousness; the very essence of creation; the vibrations of life manifested in the form of the vital winds; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), (ii) Shraddha (the eclectic virtues of faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect, devotion), (iii) Akash (the all-pervading, all-encompassing sky or space element), (iv) Vayu (wind, air element), (v) Tej (energy, splendour, radiance, glory, might, majesty and fire element), (vi) Apaha (अपः—water element which is the all-important ingredient for life), (vii) 'Prithivi' (earth element which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation), (viii) Indriya (the organs of the body, both the organs of perception as well as of action), (ix) Mana (the mind and heart complex and their stupendous potentials), (x) Anna (food, the element without which life is simply not imaginable because it provides it with the basic nourishment and energy), (xi) Virya (semen, sperms, standing for courage, valour, potency, vitality and prowess), (xii) Tapa (austerity and penance, tolerance of hardship as a means of penitence, forbearance as well as carrying out strict religious vows in order to purify one's self; the sufferance for some auspicious and noble cause) (xiii) Mantra (the key or formula to achieve success in any enterprise; it also refers to the ability to give good advise; the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, and then logically arrive at a conclusion; the different mystical formulas consisting of letters or words or phrases which encapsulated various dynamic forces of Nature which could be invoked and harnessed by the creature and help him to utilise the latent cosmic energy, strength and other magnificent powers incorporated in these Mantras for the benefit of creation at large), (xiv) Karma (the ability to do deeds and take action; the strength, energy and stamina to perform even difficult tasks), (xv) Loka (the various worlds, such as the mortal world where the creature lived on the earth, the lower heaven called the Antariksha where the junior Gods and the Spirits of dead creatures would live, and the upper heaven or Brahm Loka where the Supreme Being lives; the different worlds as experienced during the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleep states of existence of the consciousness), and (xvi) Naam (the name assigned to each independent creature; the good name, fame, reputation, honour and glory that a creature has in this world).

There are said to be sixteen Tattvas or essential units or elements in creation. They are the following—the five organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin) + the five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + the five Prans (the five subtle forms of the vital winds present inside the body—such as Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyan and Udaana) + one Mana (mind) = 16.

The fact that there are sixteen Tattvas is mentioned in Tripadvibhuta Maha-Narayan Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 5, paragraph no. 15.

These sixteen elements or units created by the Supreme Being are the sixteen Kalaas or aspects or fractions of creation. In other words, this visible creation is made up of these sixteen units in different ratios just like a colourful picture in mosaic is prepared by an expert artisan from bits and pieces of glass or stone which are independent units in their own right but when incorporated in the mosaic that forms the colourful picture they become an inseparable and an integral part of the latter. Even if one piece is removed, the picture is disturbed.

In simple terms it means that a person's total composite personality, his characteristic attributes and individuality, his vitality and stamina, his prowess, powers and strength, his drive and vigour et al can be divided into sixteen parts.

The Kalisantarana Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 2 says that these sixteen Kalaas are like sheaths or veils covering the Atma or 'self' of the man, and he can

realise this glorious divinity residing in his bosom only when these Kalaas which are like impediments or hurdles in self and Brahm realisation are removed. When this Upanishad describes them as 'hurdles or impediments' in realising the glory of the 'self' it implies that although all these sixteen qualities are related to achieving glory and majesty in the world, they have nothing to do with 'self-realisation' and 'Brahm-realisation' which is possible only by abandoning everything related to this world as well as the body both in its gross part and its subtle part.

The Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 6, verse no. 2 says that the divine entity that exhibits sixteen divine attributes lives in the body itself.

The 15 Kalaas—The Mundak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, in its Canto 3, section 2, verse no. 7 mentions of the fifteen Kalaas of a wise man merging into one main Kalaa, but it has not mentioned which these fifteen Kalaas are. However, the Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 6, verse no. 4 has cited sixteen units of creation that have emerged from Brahm. If the primary Pran or life consciousness that was formed in the very beginning of creation is removed from the list, we come to the remaining fifteen units which are like Kalaa as they represent the fifteen aspects of creation. Hence, these fifteen Kalaas would be the following—Shraddha (the virtues of devotion, faith and belief), Akash (the sky or space element), Vayu (the wind or air element), Jyoti (the light and radiance personified in the form of the fire element), Aapha (the water element), Prithivi (the earth element), Indris (the different sense organs of the body), Mana (the thinking mind and the emotional heart), and Anna (the food that would sustain the other elements of creation which had combined to give shape to the creature).

From the Anna were created the following other units or elements of creation—the Virya (the sperm which is the carrier of life and the metaphor for valour, strength, stamina, vitality, vigour, energy, potentials etc., Tapa (austerity, penance and sufferance for some noble and auspicious cause), Mantras (the different mystical formulas consisting of letters or words or phrases which encapsulated various dynamic forces of Nature which could be invoked and harnessed by the creature and help him to utilize the latent cosmic energy, strength and other magnificent powers incorporated in these Mantras for the benefit of creation at large), Karma (the ability to do deeds and take action; the strength, energy and stamina to perform even difficult tasks), Loka (the various worlds, such as the mortal world where the creature lived on the earth, the lower heaven called the Antariksha where the junior Gods and the Spirits of dead creatures would live, and the upper heaven or Brahm Loka where the Supreme Being lives; the different worlds as experienced during the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleep states of existence of the consciousness), and Naam (the name assigned to each independent creature).

The 8 Kalaas of the Gods—The eight Kalaas of the Gods and their incarnations or manifestations—Since there are said to be a total of sixteen Kalaas and the ordinary man can possess the maximum of these five Kalaas with those who are especially gifted having an additional three as narrated above (bringing the total Kalaas possessed by human beings to $5 + 3 = 8$), the remaining eight ($16 - 8$) belong to the Gods or their incarnations or manifestations. These are the following—(i) Prabhvi—this is that magical and divine power possessed by the entity that enables it to make possible things that are impossible. For example we have the manifestation of Lord Narsingh (half man and half lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu from a stone pillar to protect his devotee Prahalad from being killed by his own demon father). (ii) Kunthini—this enables the entity to neutralise the any of the effects of the five elements of creation, including their bad effects. For example we have Lord Shiva who drunk the horrible poison called Halalal that emerged as a result of the churning of the ocean without letting that corroding and very potent

poison from harming him. (iii) Vikaasani Kalaa—the ability to develop, grow, expand or increase to any size, in any form and in any way one wishes. For example we have Lord Vamaan, the dwarf mendicant, who had measured the entire world in his three steps. (iv) Maryaadini—this is the character, attribute or quality which forces the God-head to observe and exhibit exemplary virtues of righteousness, probity and propriety in spite of his ability of doing anything it wants. It virtually ties him down or restricts him to following a strict and exemplary code of conduct that he successfully implements; these codes are difficult even for the Gods to implement. For example we have Lord Ram who led an exemplary life of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety as well as observe all the character traits and attributes that are so common with all the human beings in spite of the fact that he was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the almighty, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and all-incorporating Viraat Purush who is a manifestation of the Supreme Being. (v) Sanghlaadini Kalaa—this enables the God-head to supersede or overrule the laws of Nature and perform miracles that even defy its laws. For example, Lord Krishna had created flowers and fruits even without season. (vi) Ahalaadini Kalaa—this enables one to physically remain away but spiritually be constantly near one's object of devotion or contemplation and serve him or her. This is the way Radha was able to enchant Lord Krishna in spite of not remaining with him at all times. (vii) Paripurna—this word itself implies something that is wholesome and complete in all respects. It can therefore exhibit all the sixteen qualities or Kalaas in one go, or is the entity that embodies all these qualities in its self. Amongst the incarnations of Lord Vishnu, Ram and Krishna are said to be Paripurna. The supreme Brahman is 'Paripurna' because nothing is missing from him; it is wholesome and complete. And finally, (viii) Swarupaa-wasthiti—this means the ability to withdraw or collect all the Kalaas exhibited by an entity and revert to its original and primary form when it is so wished by it. For example, at the end of the Dwapar Yuga, Lord Krishna had withdrawn all his Kalaas into himself before bringing to close his sojourn on this earth.

The 16 Kalaas of the Moon—This refers to each of the sixteenth part of the moon's diameter/disc, or one of the various phases of the moon. The moon waxes and wanes in a fourteen day phase—each day it is different from the other. Thus we have fourteen Kalaas of the moon. Added to this is the full moon and the dark moon—i.e. two more Kalaas. Therefore the total Kalaas of the moon are $14 + 2 = 16$. These fourteen Kalaas have the following names—Amritaa, Maanadaa, Pushaa, Tushti, Pushti, Rati, Dhriti, Shashini, Chandrika, Kanti, Jyotsnaa, Sri, Pritirangaa, Purnaa and Swarajaa.

The 12 Kalaas of the Sun—This refers to each of the twelfth part in which the sun's diameter/disc has been divided. They are called 'Dwaadash Aditya', meaning the twelve forms in which the Sun God is known. They are the following—Tapini, Taapini, Dhumraa, Jwaalini, Ruchi, Shushumna, Bhogadaa, Vishwaa, Bodhini, Dhaarini and Kshamaa.

Other forms of Kalaas—Other connotations of the word are the following:-- (i) the division of time equivalent to about eight seconds; (ii) one degree out of the three hundred and sixty degrees. So when this term 'Kalaa' is applied to that supreme Truth, also known as the supreme Brahman which is complete and wholesome, it implies that what is being referred to is but only one or more fraction of the whole, and therefore this one or more fraction cannot be a complete definition of the whole. At the best, it can give a rough idea of the principal, but not the exact idea of what constitute *Brahman*. This Brahman is an entity so wholesome and grand, so majestic, so magnificent, so stupendous and astounding that it transcends the definitions or parameters set by this particular word. That Truth or Brahman is beyond their reach and dimension; these various connotations of the word cannot either be applied to that Truth or Brahman nor can they define it in its entirety in any way.

The 64 Kalaas of Brahm—It is said that the complete Brahm has sixty four Kalaas. If these are divided into four quarters or quadrants or aspects or symbolic legs of Brahm, three-fourths is in the realm of the unknown (heaven) and only one-fourth is in the form of the visible creation (world). Therefore, if Brahm is a complete cycle of sixty four Kalaas, then the known physical world has $64/4 = 16$ Kalaas. It is a quadrant of Brahm. (Rig Veda, 10/90/4).

It is said that Brahm has four 'Paads' or legs which symbolise the four corners of creation. That is, Brahm surrounds this entire creation from all sides. Out of these four legs, the visible world represents one. The rest of the creation stands for the remaining three legs. According to another theory, Brahm is said to have sixty four Kalaas or aspects or levels. Out of these, the known world is represents Brahm's sixteen Kalaas, i.e. this world is only one fourth aspect of the entire Brahm—a fact metaphorically depicted by saying that Brahm can measure this world in one step. The rest is the invisible macrocosmic aspect of Brahm which is beyond imagination and comprehension. This is obvious because if one fourth is so difficult to understand, one can easily understand the astounding nature and stupendity of the remaining three fourths.

The Kalaa in the context of OM—In the geometrical symbol of Brahm which is pronounced as 'OM', these three Naad, Bindu and Kalaa appear as a crescent moon or a shallow bowl with a dot at the center placed on the top of the symbol for OM. This Naad is like a big trough and represents the cosmic bowl or crucible in which the primary cosmic gel was placed to initiate the process of creation. The Bindu appears to indicate the pin-point source of heat, radiation or any other activating source placed just above this crucible to inject sufficient energy in to the primary fluid and activate it. It acts like a source of energy directed at the crucible (Naad) set off the chain reaction that would ultimately culminate in the creation. The Kalaa which refers to the various phases of the moon would indicate the different stages through which the entire process passed from the initial stages of creation to its complete closure. But even as the parents of a child do not undergo any apparent change while the embryo develops in the mother's womb, the Supreme Being remained the same all the while the creation developed and unfolded in the cosmic womb represented by Mother Nature. Another example to explain is the moon's disc which appears to change every single day but all know that it remains the same, and the apparent change in its shape is only due to the angle with which its lighted or dark surface is viewed from the earth.

The Dhyana Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 13 proclaims that OM has eight Kalaas or facets or parts. They are the letters A, U, M, Naad, Bindu, Kalaa, Kalaa-teet and Param.

In brief, the idea is that Goddess Laxmi or Annapurna possesses all the majestic and magnificent glories and virtues listed above or implied in what has been said.

Kalaa in the context of the Jiva or the living being—The Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 33, 37-40 describe the concept of 'Kalaa' vis-à-vis the living creature. It says that the 'consciousness' that is present in the gross body of the creature called the Jiva-atma should be regarded as the one that has different Kalaas, i.e. as the one which shows various attributes and characteristic qualities and features typical or specific to that body. On the other hand, the same 'consciousness' when it is freed from the limitations and tainting effects of the gross body becomes free from these limiting factors and thus becomes one without any Kalaas, i.e. it has no attributes or special characteristic features that are specific to it, that can limit its virtues and qualities to a particular set of attributes and characteristics. Therefore the Jiva-Atma or the living being has numerous characteristics, while the Parmatma, the Supreme Being, has no such limitations.]

6. 'Oh Goddess Annapurna! Fulfill my wishes. Give me food (i.e. nourish me and protect my life). Swaha.' With the utterance of the word Swaha, the worshipper should offer oblations to the divine Goddess after having said the Mantra (hymn) in her honour. [The Mantra is given in the following verses. The word 'Swaha' is uttered at the end of the Mantra to mark its end when offerings are made to the deity worshipped.] (6).

7. The Goddess resides in this Mantra as its Atma or essence symbolized by each of its twenty-seven letters.

[The Mantra of the Goddess consists of twenty-seven letters, and each of these letters has equal importance and significance. Even if one letter is removed the Mantra would collapse. That is why all these Mantras collectively and individually are likened to the Atma or soul of the Mantra because any living being cannot survive without the presence of the Atma in his body.]

She is served and honoured by her female attendants called 'Yoginis' (female ascetics) (7).

8. 'Aim Hrim/Hrin(g) Saum Srim/Srin(g) Klim/Klin(g) OM Namō Bhagavatya-annapurne Mamaabhilashitam Annam Dehi Swaha'—this is the Mantra having twenty-seven letters with which the Goddess Annapurna is worshipped. [The brief meaning of this Mantra is—'OM Salutations to Goddess Annapurna who is honoured by the Beej Mantras 'Aim' standing for Vaak Shakti or the power of speech, 'Hrim/Hrin(g)' standing for Maya Shakti or the power to create delusions, 'Saum' standing for politeness and suave demeanours, 'Srim/Srin(g)' standing for Goddess Laxmi or the power of wealth and prosperity, and 'Klim/Klin(g)' standing for Kaam Shakti or the power of desires that drives all actions and deeds. I reverentially bow before you. Be kind to fulfill my wishes and provide me with sufficient food and nourishment. I am offering this oblation to you by saying Swaha.']

I (Ribhu) had received this Mantra from my father (Brahma the creator). I follow this instruction and worship the Goddess. I worship her with this Mantra daily with devotion, and I have been doing it for a long time. I also ensure to diligently observe all the sanctioned rules of conduct for an auspicious and righteous way of life while doing so (8).

9. When I had been worshipping Goddess Annapurna over a long period of time, she was pleased with me and finally appeared before me in her most charming and magnificent form. She had large eyes, was smiling pleasantly, and her face was like a lotus flower (9).

10. When I saw the Goddess I stood up and then paid my respects to her by prostrating before her. After that I stood before her with the palms of my folded hands touching each other as a mark of submission and respect.

The Goddess asked me for a boon, saying, 'Oh son! You are blessed. Ask for any boon (or reward or gift) that you wish to have, without hesitation and delay.' (10).

11. In this way the Goddess with large eyes asked me to request her for a boon to be granted.

Oh exalted sage (Nidagh)! I then asked 'Oh Goddess Parvati! Let the knowledge of Atma-Tattva sprout (and take firm root) in my mind.'

['Parvati' is the divine consort of Lord Shiva and is considered as the Mother Goddess from whom all other Goddesses manifested. 'Atma-Tattva' is the essential knowledge of the Atma, the essence of creation and the true self of the creature. Hence, Ribhu basically requested the Goddess to provide him with enlightenment and self-realisation. This would lead to Brahm-realisation and his ultimate Mukti or liberation and deliverance. It is to be carefully observed here that the enlightened sage has addressed the Goddess as 'Parvati' instead of as Annapurna. It is to show that he knows that there is no difference between these two forms of the cosmic Shakti, which is the dynamic power, the cosmic energy and the supreme authority of Brahm revealed in different forms and known by different names, as well as the fact that he is well acquainted with the philosophy of Advaitya which stresses that there is no duality in creation because the 'Truth' will always remain the same no matter in which form it exists.

Further, sage Ribhu was an ascetic of the highest order. For ascetics, the chief deity is Lord Shiva, and the latter's divine consort is Goddess Parvati. Hence, it was to give due respect to Goddess Parvati that Ribhu addressed Goddess Annapurna with this name. He also wished to give the message that whenever he worships Goddess Annapurna he is actually worshipping Goddess 'Parvati' because he knows that there is no difference between them.] (11).

12. When I had made this request, the divine Goddess graciously granted it to me, saying 'So be it'. Then she vanished from sight.

Immediately I became enlightened and saw the mysteries of the world unravel before me (i.e. I got a divine sight which enabled me to literally look behind the curtain and see the esoteric secrets and truth of existence that lay behind it). I could see the various aspects of the world without any effort (i.e. I could easily distinguish the truth from the falsehood; I could easily distinguish the subtle and the sublime from the gross and mortal because I had acquired the eye of wisdom and enlightenment which gave me deep penetrating powers of insight and discrimination) (12).

13. Now, I shall narrate the five types of 'Bhrams'—literally meaning delusions, illusions, deceptions and misconceptions that exist in this world, especially those related to the metaphysical field and spiritualism. These Bhrams create a lot of confusion and doubts caused by ignorance of the actual truth, which lead to perplexities and vexations.

The first Bhram is that the Jiva (the living being) and Ishwar (the Supreme Being) are two different and separate entities (13).

14. The second Bhram is that the Atma, the pure consciousness and the 'self' of the creature, regards its self as the doer of deeds ('Karta').

The third Bhram is that the Jiva has three divisions of the body and all belong to it. [The three divisions of the body are the gross body consisting of the external sense organs, the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect, and the causal body harbouring the 'cause' of existence as well as the other two aspects of the body in the form of the consciousness known as the Atma that lives in it.] (14).

15. The fourth Bhram is to believe that the entity which is responsible for the creation of this corrupt and fault-ridden world is itself tainted and has various faults inherent in the world. [This is based on the assumption that since it is said that the world is an exact image of this supreme entity, so if the image in the form of this material world is tainted then the principal of which it is an image must also be tainted.]

And the fifth and final Bhram is to believe that the 'cause' of this world (i.e. the entity that has brought about the world's existence) is different and separate from the 'result' or 'effect' of its endeavours which manifested in the form of this world.

When these five Bhrams are done away with, it is only then that true wisdom and enlightenment begin to shine in the inner-self of the creature. [These Bhrams act like dark veils that surround the sub-conscious and the inner-self of the creature, making the mind and intellect so biased and pre-programmed that it is unable to analyse any given situation dispassionately and arrive at the 'truth'. Once the veil of ignorance and delusions are removed, wisdom and enlightenment shine through like the bright sunlight emerging from behind the dark clouds in the sky.] (15).

16. When one becomes wise, erudite and enlightened he is able to see the truth behind the phenomenon of image formation and understand that the image that is seen in the mirror or any other reflecting surface is a reflection of some principal entity, and therefore it is both identical to this principal entity as well as completely different, distinct and separate from it.

[Suppose we see the image of a tree in a mirror. The image is exactly like the actual tree, but while the tree has a physical and tangible existence, its image is not, as the latter is merely a reflection of the former and therefore non-existent in the real sense.]

Similarly, pure crystal appears to be red when it is in contact with something that is red coloured. But actually the crystal has no colour of its own but merely reflects the colour of its surroundings or the things with which it is associated.

The sky element is essentially one, uniform and indivisible whole by nature, but it is nevertheless classified into various categories for the purpose of understanding—such as we have 'Ghatakash' or the sky present inside the hollow of an empty mud-pot, or 'Mathakash' or the space within the walls of a monastery. So these names create an illusion that these skies are different from one another, but the fact is that they aren't.

[For instance, if the mud-pot is broken there remains no segregation between the space that was present inside its wall and the vast space present outside its wall. There is no need to mix them; there is no effort involved in their becoming one and the same. It is a natural and automatic process. Rather, the wall of the pot had artificially created a separation in the otherwise uniform sky. Similarly, the creature's pure conscious Atma residing in his gross body is the same as the cosmic Consciousness called Brahm that is all-pervading in this creation. The gross body of the creature is the one which separates this consciousness into two, and this creates an illusion that the creature's Atma and Brahm are two different and separate entities. When the gross body is shed it is obvious that they merge with one another without any effort, and without leaving behind any trace of separation just like the space inside the pot merges with the space outside in a seamless manner when the pot is broken.]

Just like one is misled to believe that a given length of harmless rope is a fearful snake when seen from a distance, and this misconception is removed when the rope is

examined from close quarters, the misconceptions about the world (that it is true and real) too vanish when one examines it from close quarters and comes to realise the truth about it (that it is illusionary, deluding, artificial, entrapping and misleading).

Likewise, the pure metal known as gold appears to be different from the ornaments made out of it in the first instance, but on close analysis and understanding this misconception is removed because the gold is inherent to all the golden ornaments, and the latter owe their very existence to the former. It is the gold that has been converted into the ornament, and when the latter is melted it would revert back to gold. Without 'gold' there cannot ever be the existence of an ornament called 'golden'.

[When this principle is applied to this world having myriads of colourful forms and exceptional varieties of characters and features, we deduce that all these are simply multifarious manifestations of one single principal entity known as Brahm, the cosmic super Consciousness. When this world would finally come to an end, it would revert back to its principal source of origin, and it is the formless and shapeless Brahm. Just like the element 'gold' has no specific primary shape or form of its own but assumes the shape of the ornament, Brahm itself is formless and featureless but assumes the form of this world. Just as it is impossible to catch hold of the single atom of the metal gold in its primary and basic form of an 'atom of gold', it is similarly impossible to grasp 'Brahm' or 'consciousness' in its primary and basic form. But once again, as the same gold in its physical and gross form can be easily grasped and moulded, the Brahm in its grosser form can be easily understood and seen. But this visible world is not the true identity of Brahm just like the external and visible form of the ornament is not the true identity of the atom of the metal known as 'gold'. Further, even as impurities are inherent in any ornament of gold and it would be foolhardy and stupid to accuse the pure atom of gold of having the same impurities as those possessed by the golden ornament, it is also most foolish and the height of ignorance to accuse Brahm of possessing the taints and faults that are inherent to this gross physical world. Refer Canto 2, verse nos. 17-18 which explicitly endorses this view.]

In this way when a man becomes wise, erudite and enlightened, or when these virtues arise in his inner-self and the mind gets illuminated, all Bhrams (delusions, misconceptions, falsehoods) about the world are dispelled.

So, it is from then (i.e. when I was blessed by the Goddess and became enlightened) that all my Bhrams have been removed and I have become Brahm-realised.

Oh Nidagh, follow my example and attain the eclectic knowledge that is true and spiritually elevating, that would remove all your confusions and consternations, and would illuminate your inner-self so that you become self-enlightened and Brahm-realised.' (16).

17. Sage Nidagh bowed before sage Ribhu and requested him, 'Please preach me Brahm-Vidya¹, i.e. enlighten me about the secrets of the enigmatic Brahm. Nothing is superior to this knowledge and better than it.' (17).

[Note—¹Brahm Vidya, or the knowledge of the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, and Atma Vidya, or the knowledge of the Atma which is the same 'consciousness' that resides in the body of the individual creature, are intricately and inseparably linked with each other so much so that acquisition of the knowledge of any one automatically means the acquisition of the knowledge of the other, the only difference between them being the plane of existence at which these two terms

refer, for while the term ‘Brahm’ refers to the cosmic and all-encompassing macrocosmic level of creation, the term ‘Atma’ refers to the same divine entity that pertains to an individual creature at the microcosmic level. But then since this individual creature is an image of the entire cosmos, it follows that knowing the Atma, the truthful ‘self’ of one’s existence one is able to know the spiritual truths of the entire creation.

Brahm Vidya is essentially an exposition of the knowledge of the Atma Tattwa, and vice versa. This is the primary reason why sage Ribhu explains the Atma Vidya in the following verses of this Canto, and then goes on to elaborately explain how to realise this Atma and gain spiritual benefits from this knowledge when sage Nidagh has actually asked him about the ‘Brahm Vidya’ and nothing else.

The concept of Brahm Vidya has been the chief subject of discussion of a number of Upanishads, especially the following:--(a) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Kaivalya Upanishad, Brahm Upanishad, Panch Brahm Upanishad, Akchyu Upanishad, Tejobindu Upanishad, Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 1-5, and Brahm Vidya Upanishad. (b) Atharva Veda’s Mundak Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 1, section 1; Mundak (Canto) 2, section 1; Mundak (Canto) 3, section 1-2; Shandilya Upanishad, Cantos 2-3; Atma Upanishad; Tripadvibhuti Maha Narayan Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph no. 4; Canto 4, paragraph no. 1; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 1. (c) Sam Veda’s Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 7-8; Keno-panishad; Avyakta Upanishad. (d) Shukla Yajur Veda’s Brihad Aranyak Upanishad; Isha Vasya Upanishad, Adhyatma Upanishad. (e) Rig Veda’s Mudgal Upanishad; Atma Prabodh Upanishad.]

18. Ribhu was pleased and began his discourse—‘I am pleased with you and shall oblige you.

Oh Anagh (the sinless and pure-hearted sage Nidagh)! Become so wise, realised, erudite and enlightened that while externally you become a great doer of auspicious deeds and enjoy their grand rewards, internally you must remain totally detached from them, having nothing to do with either the deed or its result by renouncing all your involvements with the world, by becoming highly dispassionate and neutral.

[That is, on the one hand you should become so successful in your endeavours that you become highly respected in this world for your achievements, and therefore obtain all the glories, majesty, magnificence, honour and mystical powers that one can ever hope to acquire by being successful in life and doing auspicious deeds, you can even enjoy the rewards of your deeds and efforts, but do this only externally. Internally, you must not be affected by either the deed or its result by becoming highly dispassionate and by renouncing all your involvements with this world. You must be completely detached and disassociated from this world. Hence, while you might be enjoying this world and living a normal life like me, internally you must be submerged in meditation and contemplation, you must be constantly thinking of the Atma and Brahm, and nothing else.]

Research your true ‘self’, or research about the truth of your ‘self’. [Find out who you truly are, and what your true identity is. Refer verse no. 40 in this context.] Having known it or becoming enlightened about it, you would become eternally happy and cheerful. [That is, if you sincerely wish to obtain real spiritual peace and happiness, distance yourself from this gross and deluding world that is full of miseries as well as is mortal and transient, and instead concentrate on your Atma which is your ‘true self’ as well as the pure consciousness.] (18).

19. Realise and become enlightened about the truth of the statement 'I am that Brahm who is eternally awakened and always shining, who is pure, untainted, immaculate and pristine, who is most ancient and primordial, and who is eternal and imperishable. There is nothing except this. [That is, there is no truth other than this.]'

With this eclectic thought and firm conviction, become faultless and free from having any kind of taints. This would pave the way for your emancipation and deliverance. This would give you eternal bliss, happiness, peace, tranquility, beatitude and felicity (19).

20. Whatever that is seen here has no reality in it; it has no substance, pith and truthful existence. Have firm faith and conviction in this view.

Just like the city of Gandharvas (who are semi-gods of lower category in the hierarchy of Gods, and engage in performing tricks) which has no real existence, and like the sight of water in the mirage seen on the sand in hot desert being simply an optical illusion, whatever is seen in this world is also illusionary and deceptive, and therefore has no real existence (20).

21. Whatever is seen to exist in this world appears to be there just because it is imagined to be there (by the imaginative powers of the mind); actually it isn't.

Oh sage! Have faith in the divine and eclectic entity that is beyond the six organs of the body, and gain knowledge of it. In other words, become enlightened about the Atma or pure consciousness that is your true self; become 'self-realised'.

[The six organs are (i) the mind, which is the subtle component of the body, and (ii) the five sense organs of perception of the gross body such as ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin = total 6. The entity being referred to here is the Atma or pure consciousness. Sage Ribhu exhorts Nidagh to become self-realised by experiencing the presence of the Atma in his inner-self. This Atma is different from either the gross body or the subtle body as mentioned here.] (21).

22. This entity (i.e. the pure conscious Atma that is implied in verse no. 21) is imperishable, eternal and infinite like the sky, it is in the form of the Atma or the soul (essence; fundamental basis) of all living beings, it is immutable, indivisible and one single whole, it has no 'holes' in it (i.e. it has no drawbacks, shortcomings, taints or faults), and it is self-sustaining as well as able to sustain everything else in this world much like the planet earth (which is self-sustaining and complete in its own right, which needs no external replenishments to refill its bowl which is being constantly exploited and drained of its reserves, and which harbours all forms of diverse life along with sustaining and nourishing them without ever complaining of the way it is being abused by all and sundry).

Be convinced and have the eclectic thought that 'I am this divine entity (Atma)' (22).

23. If the mind and the sub-conscious develop some sort of dejection or depression and the creature begins to think that he is not an exalted entity and suffers from wants, or he feels that he is not complete or fulfilled (i.e. when, under the influence of ignorance and delusions, the creature begins to feel that he is suffering from this or that problem, that he

is not happy, that he would die, and so on and so forth)—in such a situation he must tell himself that it is wrong to think this way, and that he is absolutely normal and fine.

In other words, the mind and the sub-conscious must be trained to remain calm and steady, and not be moved by imaginary problems and things that have no existence. The creature (i.e. the Jiva, the living being) must learn to inculcate positive and constructive thinking and virtues, and discard negativity and destructiveness (23).

24. When the mind and the sub-conscious begin to think that the 'self' (of the individual creature) is not different from the supreme 'Self' known as the 'Param Tattwa' (literally the supreme essence; the absolute Truth; the supreme Atma or the all-pervading super Consciousness), it is then that all distinctions between the two planes of existences in which the same essential Truth (the Tattwa, the Atma, the pure consciousness) exists is removed. In other words, when the wise spiritual aspirant trains his mind to think that his 'true self' is the pure consciousness residing inside his bosom, that this body is merely a carrier of this consciousness, that consciousness is a universal and indivisible entity that cannot be mutated or fractioned, that the consciousness residing in his body is the same that prevails everywhere else and resides inside each and every living being in this creation—it is only then that he truly understands the meaning of the term non-duality or Advaitya, and consequentially is entitled to be truly called wise, enlightened and self-realised.

[We deduce from this observation that it is the 'Chitta', or the mind and its sub-conscious aspect which are responsible for either the creation of the notion of duality, or of non-duality. The difference between an ignorant and deluded man and a self-realised, wise and enlightened man is that while the mind of the former believes that the Jiva and the Ishwar are two separate entities, the mind of the latter is convinced that they are one, indistinguishable and inseparable. This delusion of there being 'duality' between the Jiva and the Ishwar is of course referred to as the 'first Bhram' as mentioned above in verse no. 13.] (24).

25. When one develops this eclectic and holistic vision of life and creation (or existence), he is able to access Mukti (liberation and deliverance) while he is alive and still has a gross body. That is, though he has a body, but for all practical purposes he is deemed to be liberated from its shackling affects; he is deemed to be free from the limitations imposed on him by the grossness of the body. Here the term 'he' would mean his 'truthful self, the Atma which is pure consciousness'.

[Such a wise man realises that his 'true self' is the pure conscious Atma that is a sublime and subtle entity which is quite different from the gross body, as the latter is merely a habitat of the former. This self-realised and enlightened man can be doing all the deeds required of him in this world, but still remain free from all bondages and encumbrances because he has developed the wisdom to understand that the deeds are being done by the body and not his 'true self' which is the Atma, the pure consciousness, and hence 'he' remains a mere spectator of what the physical gross body does. Besides this, he has also realised that the world is an imaginary thing of the mind, that it is entrapping and deluding by its inherent nature, and so anyone who is wise would have nothing to do with anything that is untrue, selfish, cunning, crap, demeaning, demoting, denigrating and entrapping for the soul.

Therefore he understands that it is well to avoid this trap. He has no expectations of any rewards or punishments from the deeds, he has no target or aim or objective for doing the deeds—for he simply does them because it is his duty and assigned to him by the Supreme Being who is the Lord of all creatures and the world in which they all live. With this eclectic and highly evolved spiritual way of thinking, he does not get involved in the deeds or in any of the demands for gratifications of the body and its sense organs. Thus no consequences accrue to him for doing deeds. For him, the body simply does not exist, and therefore the world also does not exist because the latter is directly related to the former.

This sublime thought process is a de-facto 'Mukti' for the aspirant as he has freed himself from the bondages of the body and the demands of its sense organs, as well as the world of sense objects and its attendant delusions and entangling web.]

This state of the mind and the sub-conscious is called 'Turiyateet Mukti' or the transcendental state of existence.

[This is because in the Turiyateet state of existence of the consciousness, which can be said to be the state of 'super-consciousness', the mind thinks of nothing; it is in a neutral state. In its wake, the 'self' too becomes neutral and established in the Turiyateet state because it was the mind that had been nagging the 'self' or the Atma of the creature with so many inputs and demands that the 'self' just could not find time to rest and find its peace. With the mind out of the scene, the 'self' or the Atma reverts to its primary state of existence which is inherently calm and neutral. The 'self' or the Atma therefore lives in the Turiyateet state when the mind enters this state of existence.] (25).

26. Oh Anagh (i.e. sage Nidagh who is the sinless and faultless)! Such a highly self-realised man is deemed to be in a perpetual state of Samadhi—i.e. in spite of his apparently going about his normal duties in this world expected of him, he still remains lost in his own thoughts internally, and therefore he is deemed to live in a perpetual state of trance called 'Samadhi'. [He is unconcerned with and unaware of anything around him, including even his body. His body does some or the other deed in a mechanical fashion, but his 'true self' is absolutely oblivious of what the body does or does not do. Therefore, because of this un-involvement and dispassionate attitude of the inner-self, the person in a state of Samadhi is not at all affected by any of the deeds or actions undertaken by the external gross body.]

Therefore, both types of aspirants, those who are in the Turiyateet state as well as those who are in the Samadhi state, are deemed to be Mukta; they have attained Mukti (spiritual liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation). In fact, for all practical purposes, both these states are synonymous with each other as both are transcendental states of existence of consciousness which is untainted and unaffected by any of the taints or drawbacks or shortcomings or faults of this deluding material world.

This sort of Mukti is not limited to only those who have studied the scriptures or are well versed and learned in them, and likewise it is not beyond the reach of those who do not have this privilege. In fact, Mukti is available to anyone who has become truly enlightened, wise and self-realised. This is made possible by training the intellect and the mind to think in the terms of the philosophy espoused in this Upanishad.

[That is, anyone who is diligent, determined and sincere can access this Mukti by becoming self-realised and having firm faith in the essence of Advaitya Vedanta that

speaks of the non-duality, immutability, universality and uniformity of the Truth known as Consciousness. He must be convinced that his 'true self' is the Atma which is eternal, subtle, sublime and pure consciousness, and not the body which is perishable, gross and inane.]

A person who lives in this state of mind and thoughts for a long time becomes absolutely neutral and dispassionate so much so that the ecstasy and bliss that he experiences in the higher states of spiritual realisation and enlightenment do not show in his demeanours and countenance. Externally it appears that he is in a stupor and indifferent to all emotions and feelings; but internally he is full of bliss and joys unlimited. He has reached the stage of higher consciousness when he appears neither happy nor sorrowful; he is neither cheerful nor remorseful. [This is described as the Unmani and the Manonmani* states obtained in higher states of Yoga when the mind and its sub-conscious thoughts are neutralized—refer Shandilya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, section 7, verse no. 17 and verse no. 10 respectively. Refer also to Canto 3, verse no. 4 of our present Upanishad.] (26).

[Note—There are a number of Upanishads that describe how the Mana can be controlled. References: (i) Shukla Yajur Veda's Paingal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 4. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda's Kathrudra Upanishad, verse nos. 39-40; Yogshika Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 62-65, 69-71. (iii) Atharva Veda's Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 7, verse no. 23-25.

The Paingalo-panishad, canto 4, verse no. 5 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition states that the immaculate Atma, when it erroneously associates itself with the body, i.e. the sense organs which constitute the body, and the mind, it begins to think that it is a doer of deeds and also has to suffer from their consequences. In order to free itself from this clutch of delusion, the Atma needs to exercise control over the mind and the sense organs of the body.

The mind and the sense organs of a man are inherently very restless. Their control is called 'Nigraha'. The word 'control' implies that both of them are reined in and prevented from recklessly following their usual sense objects of the material world, seeking comfort and pleasure from them. To do this we have to set a goal, and then focus them on these goals, for then, their energy and agility would be diverted towards that goal. For this purpose the goal would be spiritual and that would mean self knowledge and self realisation. Once this spiritual goal is set, the Ahankar or a false and inflated sense of self-esteem, pride and ego along with their attendant arrogance and haughtiness that are inherent in a man will take care of the rest—for now he would do his best not to fail in his endeavour which he has set for himself by himself. A focused mind and sense would help the man to control them, for now they would find no time and energy to go berserk and have to live up to their expectations.

Another method is to focus the mind on one thing at a time—and this time it is self knowledge. Once the mind is focused on this target, it would try to find out how to achieve it, and then actually implement that method.

These methods are positive and are more helpful as compared to methods used to suppress the mind and sense organs, because then they would feel like being trapped under duress and would try to break free at the first opportunity, creating greater distress to the seeker.

The mind is always restless and it keeps the body restless. This is proved when a tired man sleeps. At that time, his weary body lies like a dead log of wood, not wanting to stir at all, but the mind is so restless that the same man 'dreams' the wildest of dreams, imagining nightmarish things so profound that when he wakes up from a long sleep he is

as tired as he was at the time of going to sleep, though his body had been taking complete rest all this while. So in effect, the restless mind had not allowed the man to take 'effective rest'. This is what is meant here when the verse says that the body gets peace when the man realises the true nature of his self, because then his mind ceases to be in a state of constant flux due to the man concentrating it even forcefully upon the Atma, whereby the mind has no time to think of any thing else that is nonsense. This results in a situation when the man is able to harness the energy of the mind and concentrate it upon what lies beyond the restless picture projected by the mind; he is able to channelise the mind's vital strength from the falsehoods to the truth-hood. This in its wake gives peace to the body because with the elimination of the constant nudging by the mind, the organs of the body get a chance to find rest and peace.

When the mind is restless, it directs the body's sense organs towards their respective objects of perception and action. The mind does not allow the body to take rest. For example, a waking man's eyes are constantly jumping from one sight to another, his ears hear one sound after another, and even his skin starts to itch if he has no other thing to do! Let a man sit alone for any length of time and he would become fidgety and change his position frequently lest the parts become numb. It is here that meditation helps—it trains the body and the mind to remain steady and calm like obedient pupils under the tutelage of a strict teacher. With this outlook, the man is able to rein the mind as well as the body.

The mind decides how we perceive and experience the world—the same circumstance, the same input of stimuli might seem pleasant at one given time but most irritating at another because the mind perceives them differently. Therefore, by exercising control over the mind by diverting it to the inner-self, one is able to give peace to the body.

Again we must note that the mind and therefore the body exist because of the following *four things*—(a) 'Guna' or attributes or qualities that are inherent in the character of a man, (b) 'Kriya' or activity that are so characteristic of them both, (c) 'Vishesha' or the unique features that the mind and body possess, and (d) 'Sambandh' or the relationships that they establish with each other and the rest of the world. The physical body depends upon the mind as would be clear when we consider the fact that all the perceptions and the actions have their seat in the respective faculties of the mind (brain). For example, if the mind is somewhere else, then no matter we might be staring at an object for hours, but we would not register it in our memory, and we would not recognize it when shown again, though we had been staring it for so long. This applies to all other parts of the body. This relationship known as 'Sambandh' is elaborately described in Canto 2 of this Upanishad.

The creature has three types of bodies—viz. the gross body consisting of the sense organs, the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect complex, and the causal body which harbours the pure conscious Atma. When the first two are eliminated, or when the enlightened creature is able to divert his attention from the body making it non-relevant and non-existent thereby preventing even the mind from receiving any new inputs from the gross world and becoming irrelevant and non-existent, naturally what is left is the third body. This causal body has the Atma surrounded in the bliss sheath; it was its interaction with the external world through the medium of the mind and the body that it got agitated. Again this was because the Atma was ignorant of its holy and sublime nature; it was surrounded by the veil of 'Avidya'. When this veil of ignorance is removed from the Atma by acquisition of truthful knowledge and self-realisation based on contemplation and meditation, either as advised by one's wise and realised teacher or by the deep studying of the scriptures, the pure and original shine and glittering illumination

of the Atma comes to the fore. This leads to the realisation of its blissful nature, because when all agitations are removed, the seeker finds perpetual peace and tranquility.

The mind is the cause of all bondages for the creature. Bondage is when the mind longs for something, grieves about something, rejects something and accepts another, is please about something or displeased about another.

‘It is good to tame the mind which is difficult to tame, and is naturally inclined to be flirty and flighty, rushing wherever it wishes. A tamed mind brings happiness.’ [Dhammapada, 37.]

*The *Unmani* state is a higher and exalted state of existence of the consciousness when it rises above the mundane and the gross, and lives in a sublime state. The word itself has two connotations—one is to rise and lift up, and other is to become indifferent to things that are gross and unattractive. The ascetic who practices the form of Yoga outlined in this Upanishad is able to ‘lift’ his ‘self’ from the gross level of existence, ‘rise up’ and reach an exalted state of existence when he is able to ‘see’ the sublime Tattwa, or experience the presence in his own inner self the eclectic entity that is the essence of existence and which in common parlance of Vedanta and metaphysics is known as the ‘conscious self’ or the pure conscious Atma. This Atma is the essence or the Tattwa that is self-illuminated and that is witnessed in the higher stages of Yoga as described in this verse. It is the realisation of this Atma that is the aim of all spiritual pursuits, and it is this realisation of the Atma that is the cosmic Truth known as Brahm which gives the feeling of unmatched exhilaration and ecstasy to the ascetic. That is why he is stunned and his eyebrows are raised in a crooked stance. He had never ever experienced this scintillating source of light earlier in his life, and when he actually ‘sees’ it, he is taken by surprise and utterly stunned and dazzled by its mere presence. The word also means total renunciation.

The *Manomani* state is very similarly to the *Unmani* state. The word ‘Manomani’ has ‘Mana’ as its first part, and the word ‘Mana’ means the thinking mind and the emotional heart. Hence, the *Manomani* state is that in which the mind loses its restlessness and is put under control just like one is able to control the vital winds during the process of Pranayam done in Yoga (meditation).

This state has been described in the Shandilya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, section 7, verse no. 10.]

27. By diligently practicing control of the mind for a long time by doing various Aasans (sitting postures) and other meditative techniques of Yoga (such as Pranayam or breath control, Bandhas or closing all exposure of the mind to the turmoil of the external world, etc.), one is able to become aware of the ‘truth’ of the presence of the pure consciousness inside one’s own self as well as is able to get rid of the various Bhrams (delusions, misconceptions, deceptions, illusions etc. and their causes as described in verse nos. 13-16 above) that are associated with this life.

In other words, one is able to ascertain the ‘truth’ and do away with the falsehood. In fact, when the sun of ‘truth’ dawns on one’s mental horizon, its brilliant light automatically dispels the darkness of falsehood. He is then able to attain the auspicious state of Mukti as well as of Turiya and Samadhi (as narrated in the foregoing verses) (27).

[Note—The concept of *Mukti* has been elaborately described in this Upanishad in Cantos 3-6.]

28. A person whose mind is convinced that the Atma or pure consciousness is free from being tainted or affected by any of the qualities characteristic of this world is the one who has truthfully understood what the Atma is, and is therefore truly 'self-realised'. Such a wise man is internally calmed, serene and peaceful, as well as in a state of bliss and contentedness.

When this state is achieved, it is called the state of Samadhi (28).

29. A person who can remain calm and steady by controlling his Vasanas¹ (i.e. the inherent passions, yearnings, desires and wishes that are so characteristic of all living beings; worldly attachments and attractions; desires for gratifications) is the one who can keep his mind and heart steady and focused on his spiritual goal. Such a man is said to be steady and unwavering in his spiritual pursuit.

When an aspirant reaches this exalted state of existence when he is not disturbed by the constant interference of the various Vasanas, he can experience the bliss and peace that are only available when this state is reached. He is deemed to be in the state of Samadhi or a trance-like state marked with indifference to the gross existence consisting of the material world and the gross body, a state of complete peace and tranquility that bestows rest and bliss to the aspirant. Since true peace and bliss is available only when one gets rid of the Vasanas and obtains the state of Samadhi, it also called the 'Kaivalya state of existence'² (because the word 'Kaivalya' literally means 'one of its only kind'; unique, unparallel and matchless).

[This is very obvious—when a man is being subjected to constant nagging demands of the sense organs of the body as well as the heart and the mind, he can never ever hope to find peace. He would be constantly striving to fulfill their never-ending demands, requests, hopes and expectations. It is only when he shuns them or shuts off the door to them that he can 'sleep or rest in peace'. This phrase 'sleep and rest in peace' is a metaphor for his state of Turiya and Samadhi because he is unaware of anything pertaining to the external physical world made aware of by the medium of the sense organs of the gross body, as well as the subtle world of the sub-conscious mind that exists in his dreams. When this overwhelming calmness prevails, when there is nothing to disturb the Atma, the latter finds true rest and peace. Since true rest and peace and their accompanying sense of bliss and happiness is available only when this eclectic state is reached, it is defined as the 'Kaivalya' state—or the state that is unique and unmatched. This existential state bestows him with extreme bliss and peace; he feels full of beatitude and felicity; he is steady, unruffled and unmoving; he is unaffected by anything in this world; he is totally indifferent and neutral to everything, being merely a witness to all. He exists in his truthful state of enlightened 'self', and it is tantamount to his being in the Turiya or Samadhi state of enlightened existence.] (29).

[Note—¹The concept of *Vasanas*— *Vasanas/Vasnas* are the numerous attractions, desires, yearnings, infatuations and other natural inclinations of the creature that tie him to this world. Vasanas arise because a man thinks that one thing is better than the other and that he must get hold of the better choice. The Vasanas are deep-rooted impressions that define the texture of a man's mind and intellect. On the other hand, intentions are conscious thoughts that determine his actions. Vasanas are innate inclinations and tendencies which form the propelling force behind a man's desires, thoughts and actions.

Classification of Vasanas:--There are many ways to classify the Vasanas. Let us examine them one by one as follows.

(i) The *Vasanas* are of three types—viz. Lok Vasana, Deha Vasana, and Shastra Vasana—refer Atharva Veda's *Param Hans Parivrajak Upanishad*, paragraph no. 2. Now let us examine them in detail.

(a) *Lok Vasana*—this is the desire and greed for wealth, fame, sense objects of the material world, territorial gains, authority and powers, majesty, pomp and pelf etc. The Vasanas relating to the world are the various attractions and allurements that his apparently enchanting and captivating world presents to a person. It also refers to the various and endless responsibilities and obligations, real and imaginary, that a person has, or imagines he has towards this world.

Sometimes the Lok Vasanas overlaps the Deha Vasana as often they are interconnected. For example, one's 'Vasanas' pertaining to one's son, property, material wealth and other assets which a person has acquired by the efforts made by his body and which help him to get established in this world and enjoy enhanced comforts and pleasures as well as respect and honour that such acquisitions entitle him to in this physical world also come under this category of Vasanas. All such relationships that exist in this world, such as his relatives, his contacts, his friends, his peers and compatriots, along with his obligations, his contracts and his responsibilities related to them are called Lok Vasanas. It would also include all things done by him in this world to appease those who are related to him with this body.

(b) *Shastra Vasana*—this is the desire and yearnings related to scriptures and ancient literature, such as a desire to become an expert in them and be recognised as such, the desire to study them more and more, acquiring scholarship and literal expertise in them with its accompanying fame, renown, glory, honour, respect and financial prosperity, become much sought after and acquire a wide follower-ship based on these qualities and honours bestowed upon them by the world by the virtue of their unique abilities and expertise of the scriptures etc. But usually such knowledge is superficial, and the so-called expert of scriptures relies more on their letter rather than on their spirit, engrossing himself in endless discussions and debates leading to confusions and contradictions instead of solving them. The scriptures are vast and like a fathomless sea. Trying to realise the Supreme Truth by delving into the depths of the scriptures is like an attempt at extracting a single piece of pearl by churning the whole ocean. Though it is theoretically possible in thousand of years of continuous effort, but practically it is impossible and incredulous to even think of such a success; it is a too far-fetched notion. It is rare to find a truly wise and enlightened soul amongst worldly scholars and orators, for the latter's erudition is limited to gaining fame and name and nothing more.

(c) *Deha Vasana*—this is the insatiable desire and passion related to the gratification of the sense organs, such as becoming licentious, engrossing oneself in enjoyment of worldly sensual objects, and all other types of indulgences and gratifications. The 'Vasanas' pertaining to the body also relate to the attachments that one has with one's son, property and wealth which a person has acquired and enjoyed with his body, and the world around him—his relatives, his fame, his contacts, his friends, his obligation, contracts and responsibilities. It also means gratification of the sense organs of the body as well as to appease those who are related to him with this body so that they continue to serve and help him and give comfort and pleasure to his body.

Now, when we talk of the Atma as pure consciousness or an embodiment of light, the question arises 'how can we obtain the clearest perception of that reality?' The greatest exponent of Vedanta philosophy, sage Adi Sankaracharya prescribes the following four paths—(i) discrimination between the eternal and truthful, and the non-eternal and non-truthful, (ii) renunciation of desires for sensual gratification and enjoyment of pleasures from this materialistic world, (iii) development of six divine eclectic wealth—self control, surrender, faith, forbearance, peace/tranquility and poise of the mind, and (iv)

sincere desire for liberation and deliverance, because it is only then that the creature will try to find ways to achieve it.

(ii) Another classification is based on the proportion of *bad* or *good* qualities inherent in and integral to the nature of a man. Therefore, there are broadly classified into Good Vasanas, and Bad Vasanas depending upon the proportion of good quality and the bad quality that is inherent in the man and forms his innate character. These qualities are called the Gunas, and they are three in number—viz. Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna. Hence, we have *Satvic Vasana*, *Rajic Vasana* and *Tamsic Vasana*.

The *Satvic Vasanas* are those desires that are determined by the predominance of the best quality called Sata in a man. Such a man is inclined to do auspicious deeds and take noble actions. He is naturally inclined to and attracted towards those things in this world which help him to cultivate higher values in life, such as the desire of serving others selflessly, being compassionate, relinquishing one's right for the general welfare of others, spending time in finding ways to achieve knowledge of the 'self', study of the scriptures and generally spending life in noble thoughts and deeds, etc.

The *Rajic Vasana* is the middle path which creates desires for name, fame and power and their accompanying laurels and majesty. Such tendencies need commensurate actions so that they can be effectuated. Hence such a man would be engrossed in the world and its activities; he would serve others but would have a certain degree of self-interest in whatever he does; he would judge everything but with himself as the overriding factor. He would study the scriptures but not for his spiritual well being but to gain money and fame and a large follower-ship.

Finally, the lowest of them is the *Tamsic Vasana* which makes a man pervert, sinful, selfish, indulgent and indolent to the extreme. He would snatch other's right in order to fulfill his own desires; he would study the scriptures only to find fault with them and ridicule them. He would not have any qualms in making others suffer by his actions and derive immense satisfaction and pleasure in it. He would have no scruples and a sense of probity and propriety in what he does in order to satisfy his desires, wants, yearnings, aspirations and expectations.

It ought to be noted that there are no water-tight compartments in these three types of Vasanas; they are diffused and more often than not difficult to differentiate one from the other. Their intensity may change with the change in the person's attitude and the level at which his thought processes as well as his mind and intellect operate as he develops wisdom and knowledge.

Vasanas arise due to one's desire to gratify the natural instincts of the sense organs. Such as for example, the eye has a natural urge to see beautiful objects. So if a man falls prey to this urge, his mind and intellect would come into play and the man would then try everything in his means and power to acquire that object which pleases the eye, thereby dragging other organs in this quagmire. Each organ would then make its own demand, and the demands never cease but go on multiplying in a compound manner. Actions prompted by the element of ego and egocentric desires such as the attitude of 'I, Me and Mine' leave in their wake a chain of desires and wants which keep us prodding, propelling and compelling to satisfy them, and the chain of Vasanas is set in motion.

So the easy way to stem the surge of Vasanas and finally obliterate them is to first analyse one's natural inclinations and tendencies, and then slowly divert them from lower level to a higher level by conscious effort and diligence. One of the methods to do this is to do deeds but without expecting any rewards from them—which is at the core of Karma Yoga. With this attitude, the accumulation of Vasanas is gradually exhausted. Another way is to acquire truthful knowledge by studying the scriptures directly or getting to know about their great tenets and teachings from others. This helps to remove 'Agyan' or ignorance of the reality and truth which is at the very root of the creation of Vasanas in

the first place. If one becomes wise and gets acquainted with great metaphysical truths about the 'self' and the Atma along with the nature of existence and its essential form as well as the real goal of human life in spiritual terms, it would be natural and logical that he would be more inclined to overcome all sorts of Vasanas, including the Satvic ones. In fact, he would have no Vasanas at all.

Now let us examine these *three Gunas* in brief. (a) 'Sat Guna' is the 1st eclectic quality that refer to all the positive, noble, virtuous, auspicious and good qualities present in a creature, (b) 'Raj Guna' is the 2nd type of quality which pertains to worldly passions, desires and ambition etc., while (c) 'Tam Guna' is the 3rd type of quality which is regarded as the lowest and meanest of the three qualities leading to various vices, evils, sins, perversions etc. The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular nature of an individual giving him his individuality and his special characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body—e.g. two men—might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, behaviour, thinking, outlook, action and deeds, wisdom and way of living. This is what is meant when it said that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual, countable specific number that there are actually and physically 84 Lakh types of bodies of living beings; it only symbolically refers to the huge possibilities that are possible with these three 'Gunas' and their different combinations that can imaginably produce a myriad variety of creation that can be created with these three basic qualities and their various sub classes of qualities.

Satvic tendencies are the best tendencies amongst the three. They are positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc. Rajsic tendencies are the second best quality which produces worldly desires, passions, selfishness, obsession, expansion etc. The Tamsic tendencies are the worst types leading to vices, perversion, delusions, deception, gloom, anger, ignorance et. al.

The proportion of the three Gunas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclinations of the creature. For example, a person with a greater proportion of 'Satvic' (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of 'Rajsic' or 'Tamsic' qualities. So we can say that sages, seers, prophets, scholars and generally enlightened persons have a high degree of 'Satvic' qualities in them; kings and householders who live a noble life are example of those with higher amount of 'Rajsic' quality in them; while sinners, killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats etc. are those people with higher 'Tamsic' quality in them. These Gunas have direct bearing on the personality of a man.

The Vasanas have been described in detail in the *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse no. 70, and Canto 4, verse nos. 16, 20, 23.

²*Kaivalya*— The word *Kaivalya* means the 'only one' or the non-dual state. It is the supreme stature of existence which is the one of its kind and the most exalted state of existence when nothing but the non-dual consciousness is discernible everywhere in the world by the enlightened creature. There is non-duality and uniformity everywhere. It is a state of existence which is similar to the state of Samadhi in which the man goes about his daily life doing his chores in a routine way without getting emotionally involved in them and even remaining totally oblivious of what he is doing. He remains totally submerged in his inner self and thoughts. He appears in a virtual trance-like state of existence usually observed in realised ascetics and great philosophers. People regard such men as absent minded, but they are so much absorbed in themselves that they are not concerned with what others think of them. For them, the external world ceases to exist though they physically live in it and interact with it.

This Kaivalya form of existence is tantamount to being liberated from the fetters that tie the creature to this body and the world because though he lives in the world he is totally indifferent to it; he is free from all worries, sufferings and sorrows as well as all forms of attachments, entanglements and involvements with the artificial and deluding world that are the usual features of an ordinary worldly man submerged in the world's entrapping charms. This state is comparable to the actual and physical liberation of the soul upon death when it is physically liberated from the bondages of the limitations imposed by the gross body; the only difference being that in the former case the man is alive and enjoys the privilege of having a body that allows the ethereal Atma to enjoy this physical world in a totally dispassionate and detached manner as if it is a neutral observer, while in the latter case he sheds the burden of the body altogether.

The Kaivalya state is considered superior because such a man lives a life of happiness and contentedness; he never suffers from any worldly miseries and worries; he treats the world around him as of no consequence, and remains indifferent to its deluding effects and their entanglements. On the other hand, the ordinary man might find emancipation upon death, but his life is a burden while he is still alive in it. Such a man has not truly understood the teachings of the scriptures; he has not understood the 'spirit' of spiritualism and metaphysics as enumerated by the Upanishads because their main aim is to give peace and tranquility to the tormented soul and help in its liberation from the deluding effects of the body and the world. This concept has been elaborately described in *Muktiko-panishad* of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

The Kaivalya form of Mukti envisions the merger of the 'self' with the supreme 'Self' so that there is no chance of the 'self' or the pure conscious Atma to take birth again (refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 108-109 of Krishna Yajur Veda). For all practical purposes as far as the ascetic is concerned, this would be equivalent to merging his soul with Brahm because the supreme Brahm resides in his own 'self' as his Atma or consciousness as well as his Pran or spark of life. Besides this, the very fact that he has reached this state of Samadhi itself indicates that he has crossed the earlier stages where any of the worldly corruptions can demote him and pull him away from his spiritually exalted stature. He would have realised that the body is not his 'true self' but it is the Atma, and that this Atma is the supreme transcendental Consciousness personified. How can anyone with such an enlightened view of the 'self' can ever be expected to be weighed on the same scale as his other brethren who treat their bodies as their 'self' and remain engrossed in this material world of sense objects. So, though he retains the body and appears to be of a lower category than the ascetic who has discarded his body to merge his 'self' with the supreme Brahm, basically there is no difference between the two. The former type of ascetic who retains the body is called 'Jivan Mukta', or the one who has obtained liberation and deliverance from the fetters of the world while still living in it because he has certain obligations to fulfill, and the latter is called 'Videha Mukta', or the one who has obtained the same liberation and deliverance by abandoning the body. The body in both the cases causes no hindrance for him, because even while he has retained the body as a Jivan Mukta if he prefers the option to do so, he already has acquired so much divine mystical and magical powers called the various Siddhis that he can perform super human and super natural deeds that anyone with a body cannot ever expect or hope to do. These have been enumerated in verse nos. 73-74, 87, 91, 94, 97 and 102 of the Yogtattva Upanishad.

But there is subtle catch here which must be closely observed. Verse nos. 21-22 and 76-79 of the Yogtattva Upanishad clearly state that the use of various Mantras and obtaining Siddhis are impediments in obtaining the true fruit of Yoga; those who wish to acquire them and remain satisfied with them are of a very low type of Yogi.

Further, verse nos. 14-18 of this Yogtattva Upanishad describe what constitutes 'true Gyan' or true knowledge and wisdom, and it is to obtain the only state of existence that can give eternity to the Atma, and it is called 'Kaivalya', and this is the merger of the self with the supreme Self. This is obtainable when the Atma discards the body and finds final liberation and deliverance, or ultimate emancipation and salvation. This is 'unconditional Mukti', while the one obtained while retaining the body would then naturally be a 'conditional Mukti' because while the body is still there, Mukti cannot be absolute; it is conditional and subject to certain parameters and conditions that naturally come when someone has an obligation to fulfill. The obligation in this case is towards the body because the Atma is obliged to remain inside it and it must pay its due respect and the dwelling 'rent' to it! Therefore, the Atma is under 'conditioned freedom' if the ascetic chooses to retain the body and remain inside it instead of discarding it and becoming 'absolutely free', in which case the Atma becomes 'unconditionally free'. The later state is called 'Kaivalya' Mukti. The body has to be discarded ultimately, sooner or later; the soul is therefore not 'absolutely' free if the ascetic retains the body as compared to the case where he decides to permanently abandon it once the window of golden opportunity arrives during Samadhi.

Therefore, the ascetic has two options open to him as already pointed out in verse nos. 105-107 of the Yogtattva Upanishad—i.e. either to obtain Kaivalya Mukti which is like the Videha Mukti, or to obtain Jivan Mukti. There is only a subtle hair-fine difference between the two.]

30. Therefore, I pray and hope that you are blessed with the state of the mind when it is free from any kind of Vasanas—either those that are related to the gross body (such as the desire for the gratification of its sense organs) or those that are related to the external world and its material sense objects (such as the desire to obtain them, hoard them, enjoy them and be attached to them). Let your mind become neutral and non-involved in any of the Vasanas and their attendant ills; let your mind think that it does not do anything, that it is a non-doer of deeds that are done in the wake of instigation made by the Vasanas (30).

31. The Vasanas inherent in the creature are like a dark cloud that envelops the Chitta (mind, the intellect, the sub-conscious) from all sides. They are the cause of all the problems and miseries of the creature; they give the creature all sorts of torments and troubles. Hence, a wise man should endeavour to decimate or at least weaken the Vasanas gradually with the final aim of eliminating them (31).

32. A wise man should intelligently and diligently abandon the notion of existence of anything worthwhile in this material mundane world from the radar of his mind and sub-conscious. He must train it to assume the virtues of the sky. Just like the sky has no boundaries and limitations, his mind too has no fetters or limitations. A person who remains engrossed in contemplating upon his inner-self lives like the sky. He too attains such glorious virtues as those possessed by the sky.

[All living beings have a natural tendency of seeking happiness and peace. Since he is immediately in contact with the world as soon as he is born, he has the world as his constant companion since birth, and finds solace and comfort in its company. This world is visible and tangible, and at least it fulfills his immediate needs for all material things that provide comfort, happiness and enjoyments. The creature is so overwhelmed with

this pampering that he forgets about his long-term spiritual welfare just like a spoilt child goes after sweets unconcerned about what this indulgence would do to his long-term health. How would the child know that it is wrong to eat too many sweets, that they would damage his teeth, cause such chronic diseases as diabetes, and ruin his liver and other internal organs, if someone does not tell him?

The same thing applies to the creature. He has seen and experienced the charms of this world since his birth, and no one had told him that it is illusionary and transient, that it would trap him in its web like a spider catches an insect and then never lets it free till it has sucked the life out of its prey. The creature is not aware of the fact that pursuing this world would lead him to nowhere just like running behind the mirage would not lead to water in a hot desert. In this scenario, neither the creature nor his mind is at fault because no one had enlightened them about the reality. This responsibility falls upon the scriptures and the wise teacher (the Guru) who make the spiritual aspirant aware of the reality of the situation, and then it is the responsibility of the individual to make an intelligent and well thought out decision for his own sake. This is exactly what is meant by saying that the creature should train his mind. The mind is simply an instrument to carry out the instructions of the 'Master', who in this particular case is the Atma because it is the 'true self and identity' of the individual creature. Thus, when the wizened, self-realised and enlightened creature becomes aware of the falsehood of the world and its temporary nature, when he logically deduces that anything that is false and temporary cannot give happiness and peace that is of a permanent nature, he instructs the mind to turn away from the world and search for it elsewhere. It is then that the mind is said to be turned away from the various 'Vasanas' related to the body and the world. The mind is an intelligent entity; it is like the super-computer that works out an answer instantly once the instructions are fed into it. So the mind immediately changes track and concentrates upon the inner-self and begins to dwell in the 'subtle world of the consciousness'. It is here that it finds the source of eternity and peace, it is here that it finds true happiness and bliss which are unaffected by the turmoil of the external world which is transient and deluding. Once someone has tasted the real nectar he would obviously not want to have anything to do with fakes. Thus, once the aspirant tastes the nectar of peace, happiness, bliss and contentedness that comes by overcoming the various Vasanas related to this world and the body, he would naturally shun them without any further prodding, counseling or cajoling.

A wise person must teach his mind not to register anything in this material world by intelligently convincing it of its futility and falsehood. When the mind is politely educated of the reality and truth, it would abandon the material world out of its own free will because it would not find any substance in it. The mind would realise that it would gain nothing by pursuing this world, and hence it is a waste of time and energy for it to do so. The mind is not a foolish entity, rather it is the only entity in the otherwise inane body that can think, research, analyse, discriminate, deduce and decide. So when it is intelligently convinced, it would see the 'truth' without much cajoling or use of coercion. Once the mind is convinced, the rest becomes easy because it is the mind that is the power-house and the driving force in the body that actually holds the strings of what a creature does and what he does not do.

When the mind becomes neutral, then it would be like the 'sky' because the sky harbours so many things that are lodged in its bowls—such as for instance the numerous

pollutants, the dust particles, the gases, the uncountable heavenly bodies as stars, planets, comets, cosmic debris, asteroids, galaxies etc.—but it still remains unaffected and inherently untainted and clean. What is seen as the pollution of the sky is only of a physical dimension with a limited extent, for the element that is called the sky is very subtle, vast and all-pervading by nature so much so that the pollution that is seen in its very limited and miniscule area is not even like a small pebble or a minute speck on its vast and infinite shore. A neutral mind becomes as quiet and calm as the deep recesses of the sky. It accepts everything without getting attached to any of them, and the world keeps on rising and ebbing in its front but it remains indifferent to and undeterred by it. Nothing can affect the creature if the mind is under control. A freed mind has boundless potentials and powers; it can achieve stupendous results not otherwise possible for the creature. Since the mind is the driving force that governs all thoughts, behaviours, actions and deeds of all living beings, a person with a tamed and trained mind can achieve great mystical powers and tremendous spiritual achievements, and indeed become supernatural by rising above the mundane and acquiring grand virtues and eclectic qualities of an infinite dimension. His majesty and powers, his good name and fame spread far and wide; he acquires such spiritual powers and authority that he virtually becomes as vast and infinite as the sky. He develops a holistic view of this creation and the world around him; he no longer remains selfish but becomes one who has a broad and all-inclusive approach to this life. No amount of worldly temptations and coercion of the sense organs of the body would ever deflect him from his chosen path or disturb his poise and state of neutrality. No corruptions of the surrounding world would ever affect him and taint his inner self just like the lotus flower whose petals are never moistened by the dirty water of the pond in which it grows. Hence, a controlled and trained mind is compared to the vast, fathomless and incorruptible sky.

A person who has experienced the pure consciousness attains such glories, such magnificence, such majesty, such mystical powers, such incorruptibility, and such eclectic spiritual virtues that they are compared to the sky in their vastness, their depth, their insight, their reach and their all-inclusive nature as well as their incorruptibility and immaculacy.] (32).

33. Just like a shrewd trader having no special affinity or attraction or preference for any particular place or spot where he would like to stay as his primary focus is on his business and its profits, and he would not think twice before abandoning the first place and moving to some other place should the latter give him better chances of doing enhanced business and earn more returns, a wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant also has no special preferences for either a forest or a village. For him, both are alike as long as they serve his purpose of achieving his spiritual goals. He has no preference or abhorrence for anything (because, for one, he has inculcated the noble virtues of having neutrality, indifference, equanimity and fortitude, and second, his chief aim is obtaining liberation and deliverance for his soul, and therefore any situation that helps him achieve it is dear to him, and any situation that does not is shunned by him).

[A businessman is focused on his business rather than on the comforts or pleasures that a particular place provides. He leaves the comfort of his home and the known environs of his town to which he is used to since birth to venture out into unknown countries and live in hostile circumstances if that helps him to make a profit.

No matter how charming a place is, if it does not allow him easy business and profit opportunity, he would chuck it without the least regret or compunction, and instead opt for a place that is favourable and conducive for his business interests.

Similarly, if a wise man finds that the forest is too uncomfortable for him in doing meditation and contemplation, if he finds that he is unable to cope with the harsh conditions of the forest no matter how much they are extolled by the scriptures for their utility in one's spiritual life, the wise man would not hesitate to discard the idea of living in a forest. He can even live outside a village (or for that matter any inhabited area) in an abandoned or lonely place (such as a mountain or hill side, a cave, the banks of a river, a remote shrine outside a small hamlet, etc.) wherever he finds peace and an environment that is conducive to his spiritual pursuit.

This verse assumes tremendous practical importance. It shows that ancient sages and seers were not dogmatic, rigid, bigots or fanatical in their views. The stress is on internal peace and control of the mind in order to attain one's spiritual objectives; the thrust is on flexibility of approach, on self awakening and accessing the truth. What is the use of going to the forest if the body is so uncomfortable and restless that in spite of the best of efforts of the man his mind cannot find its much sought-after peace for which the man had gone to the forest in the first place, and how can an agitated, restless and distracted mind that remains in a state of flux can ever be conducive to one's obtaining his cherished goal in life? He would rather be better off in the vicinity of a village or even in his home if that gives him mental assurance of stability and peace. Refer verse no. 34 below which is very explicit in this view.

In practice, this is the reason why Sanyasis, or renunciate friars, monks and mendicants, are expected to beg for food on a daily basis from households for their sustenance. Obviously they would need to live near inhabited areas where they can go begging for food from households—no household is found in a forest! If finding food was the only criterion, they could ask some rich man such as a king to make all arrangements for them in the forest itself without the need for going to the 'household' for food. This stark truth stares in one's face if he is wise enough to read the scriptures with an open mind in order to understand their intentions and purpose rather than becoming too literal and bookish in his approach in studying them.] (33).

34. A self-realised man, being focused on his inner-self and lost in the thoughts of the pure conscious Atma, treats everything and all situations in life equally, with great equanimity, and without distinguishing between them.

He may be sleeping, awake, walking or reading, but he always remains focused on the Atma; he remains steady in contemplating and meditating upon the Atma irrespective of the physical plane in which his gross body lives.

Such an enlightened and spiritually attained man may live in a forest or a village or a big town—all are equal for him.

[This verse compliments the observations made in verse no. 33 above. The idea is that when the mind is focused on the inner-self and is turned away from the outer world—i.e. when the mind is controlled as envisaged in verse nos. 20-22 above—the aspirant is not at all influenced by his surroundings. This is because it is the mind that actually makes the Atma aware of the various conditions prevailing in the outer world, thereby being the cause of all restlessness that the Atma is subjected to. Once the mind

and the sub-conscious are controlled and properly trained, the Atma—i.e. the ‘aspirant himself’ in the truthful sense—is rest assured of peace and tranquility, as well as their attendant bliss and happiness.] (34).

35. A person who is peaceful, tranquil, serene and calm in his inner-self would treat the outside world in a similar manner.

[This is like looking at the world through a glass window. The sights seen would assume the colour of the glass. If the glass is red tinted for instance, the world outside would also be red-hued. This fact has been beautifully brought out in Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 93/1-93/15, and in Naradparivrajak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 6, verse no. 3.

Now therefore, if the inner-self is pure and untainted, if it is calm and peaceful, the Atma—which incidentally is the ‘observer’ living inside the dwelling known as the body of the creature—would see or observe the outside world as being calm and peaceful. On the contrary, if the inner-self is restless and agitated, the outer world too appears to be restless and agitated in equal proportion for the creature. In other words, a man sees the world like he himself is. Hence the importance is on attaining inner peace and quietude instead of seeking it outside because the ‘outside’ is a world that is constantly on the boil and ever simmering like the surface of the hot sand in a desert when mirage makes its appearance.]

Similarly, a man whose inner-self is burning with ‘Trishna’ (greed, rapacity, yearnings and wants) would find the world too tormenting and agitating for his soul. He would find only miseries and sorrows in the world (because his greed and yearning never ends, the more he gets the more he wants, and like a man running behind the illusive water seen in a mirage in the hot desert such a man too does not find peace anywhere in the world, but is rather scorched by the various sorrows and miseries that accompany shortages, unfulfilled desires, lack of opportunities and so many other things or situations that lead to dismay and frustration that seem to engulf him from all sides, drowning him and suffocating him in their wake).

[An internally contented man would be happy with whatever he has in this world and would thank the Lord for it, and an internally unsatisfied man may become the Emperor of the whole earth but would still want more of it, and remain dissatisfied and greedy throughout his life. Internally he is being ‘burnt’ by numerous aspirations, yearnings, desires and wants, and externally this world ‘burns’ him in failed ambitions leading to a chain of frustrations, dismay, distrust, strife, jealousy, ill-will, enmity, animosity and their accompanying sorrows, miseries and pains.] (35).

36. For a self-realised and enlightened man, the subtle and sublime entity that lives in his inner-self is also the one that lives uniformly everywhere else in this creation. This eclectic entity is the ‘Atma’ or the pure consciousness.

[In other words, an enlightened man sees the Atma, the pure consciousness, as the only entity that matters in this creation; he sees this Atma not only as his own ‘self’ but also as the reality in the rest of the creation. When he sees other creatures, he sees not their gross bodies but the Atma in that form; hence he would treat all the creatures equally because the Atma is a uniform and universal entity, being the all-pervading

consciousness. This observation is the essence of the philosophy of Advaitya Vedanta.] (36).

37. A man who is wise, self-realised and enlightened, a man who has experienced the 'truth', i.e. who has understood that the body is not his 'true self' but it is merely the habitat of the Atma which is his 'true self', and that all the deeds are done by the external gross organs of the equally gross body and not by the Atma—well, such a man is full of equanimity and dispassion, he is not bothered about the deeds or their consequences.

Such a man uses all the organs of the body to do all the deeds required to be done by him in this world according to destiny or the will of the Lord, but still remains totally detached and disassociated from them. This is because he knows that 'he' (i.e. his true 'self' known as the Atma) is not doing something, but it is the body that is doing anything. He therefore neither feels happy or exhilarated at being successful in doing the deeds or being rewarded for them, nor does he feel dejected or depressed or sorrowful or dismayed at not being able to do them as expected or even failure to do them at all if the circumstances do not permit. [Since he is of the view that 'he' is not doing anything, it is natural that he is not entitled to the rewards or punishments for the deeds done.]

In this way he is able to access exemplary peace and stability of mind and sub-conscious. He is said to be a person having a 'Samaahit Chitta'—i.e. the mind, intellect and the sub-conscious that accepts all without any distinction. That is, he accepts sorrows and joys with equal pleasure; he treats successes and failures with equal detachment. Nothing ruffles him; nothing disturbs his tranquility and stability. He has thus attained an exemplarily equanimous state of being (37).

38. Such a wise and self-realised man who is enlightened about the Atma, the pure conscious 'self', treats or sees everything, everyone and every situation with exemplary equanimity and uniformity of mind. He sees no distinction between any two given entities, and sees them all in his own likeness.

[This is because he does not see the external features of the gross body, but rather sees the Atma residing inside it. This Atma is a universal entity and the all-pervading consciousness; the Atma is immutable, unchanging and indivisible. Hence, the Atma that resides in his own bosom as his soul or true self is the same as the one that resides in the creature standing in his front. Therefore, though for practical reasons and exigencies of this life he may be required to maintain decorum, observe social norms and conform to formal hierarchy of society, internally he would have the same love and respect for the other person as he would have for himself. This is the secret behind the second of the ten commandments of Jesus Christ—'Love thy neighbour as you would love yourself'—the Holy Bible, Gospel of St. Mark, 12/31.

As for treating all situations alike, it has already been said in verse no. 37 that a wise and enlightened man remains unattached to his deeds, and therefore unaffected with their results, good or bad. This helps him in being steady and unmoved under all circumstances.

And as far as material things are concerned, he has already understood that whatever is seen in this world is transient and illusionary because the world in which they exist is itself transient and illusionary. It is because the world is a creation of the mind; it is like the dream seen when the man sleeps, the only difference being that while his gross

organs are inactive in the dream they are active while he is awake. But in both the cases the world is the creation of the mind—albeit one world exists at the gross physical level that is visible, and the other exists at the subtle level that is not visible, but this does not alter the fact that it is a product of the creative ability of the imaginative mind. Anything that is ‘imagined’ can not be true, real, stable and sustainable.]

Hence, he sees wealth belonging to others as being useless clods of clay or pieces of useless earth. This view is natural to him; it is not due to some fear or compulsions.

[That is, when a wise and enlightened man says that wealth belonging to others are as worthless for him as a ball of clay, he is not saying it because he cannot get hold of this wealth as he is not powerful enough to snatch it from the other person if given a chance, but because he actually means it sincerely. Deceit and conceit are not the playground for the Atma.] (38).

39. For a wise, enlightened and self-realised man, it does not matter whether death comes now or after a long time. Such a man is never tainted or influenced by any of the faults and shortcomings pertaining to this world; he remains as pure, untainted and uncorrupted as a piece of pure gold that might have fallen in a patch of muck and slush on the earth, or may be smeared with slime.

[It is very important to understand this verse in the context of what has been said immediately before in the previous verses. The piece of gold is not at all affected by anything in which it falls or is covered with—for it can be easily cleaned by washing off the impurity with clean water and scrubbing. The slush or the slime can never ever affect the inherent internal purity of gold. Similarly, a man who is wise, self-realised and enlightened lives in the corrupt surroundings of this world, he even does deeds in this world, but internally he is pristine pure, holy, and unaffected by anything. He is like the piece of gold cited in this verse. The ‘gold’ is a metaphor used for a priceless entity with immaculate purity and tremendous intrinsic value that never fades or erodes.

Now, let us examine how this applies to the man who treats the wealth of others as mud. If a man knows for certain that he would die the next day, then it is natural that he develops total dispassion for anything of this world—he would not want wealth and pleasures; he would not like to do anything at all, what to say of his hoping for acquiring material wealth and expecting long-term financial rewards for all his efforts. But suppose a man is young and healthy, belongs to a rich family, has an excellent job, and is well educated—will he think in the same vein? The answer is ‘very rarely, if at all remotely yes’. The latter type of man never imagines even in his wild dreams that all his wealth would vanish the next day when he dies, or that this wealth would not help him conquer death.

So, the man who is being cited here in this verse is not the one who has developed total renunciation and dispassion out of certain existential compulsions, or due to circumstances forcing him to pretend as being dispassionate and detached in order to overcome his shame or frustration because success eludes him, or because he has not been able to taste the fruit of his labour, and therefore he hides behind pretensions of being a wise man who does not want wealth as he had developed renunciation. Instead, the man who is being referred to here is one who develops this eclectic and spiritually liberating view sincerely and honestly after careful examination and analyses of all available data to arrive at the ‘truth’ of existence, the ‘truth’ of the world and his own

‘self’ which the Upanishad prefers to call the ‘Tattwa’. And this ‘Tattwa’ is that the real thing that matters for the man is the pure consciousness called the Atma which is eternal and blissful, that this world is deluding, illusive, artificial and entrapping like the mirage seen in the desert, that it is transient and illusionary, that to pursue it is like following the setting sun in the western horizon in order to reach it before it sets because the more a man moves in that direction the more the horizon as well as the sun move away or recede from him, and that to be freed from this quagmire of fruitless running around in pursuit of some illusive objective one needs to free one’s self from the entire spectrum of delusions pertaining to the world vis-à-vis his own ‘self’ in a comprehensive manner.] (39).

40. Contemplate and ponder deeply on the questions ‘who am I’, ‘how or what is all this (that I see around me)’, and ‘how is birth and death caused’.

When you (i.e. Nidagh) begin to ask these questions, it is then that you would be inspired to search out and find the answer. Then you will be able to find the great spiritual fruit in the form of the universal Truth.

[That is, when you find the answer to these questions by searching for them yourself, you would be more convinced by what you discover as opposed to the truth being told to you by someone else. This is because in the latter case you may doubt its authenticity and may feel that it is being imposed upon you or advised to you by some vested interests. But when you search it out yourself you would be going through layers after layers of facts and half-truths, you would be able to see how things have come into being, and you will be having first-hand knowledge of so many other things on the way to the Truth. It would be an eye-opening journey of spiritual discovery for you, and the knowledge that you gather en-route to the ultimate Truth would be like an additional bonus for you, enlightening you about so many practical things that you may not know if you do not make the right effort of undertaking the research yourself. A hungry man who is hungrily searching for food relishes it more than a man who is served ready-made food on the dining table.

So do it yourself instead of being spoon-fed! A teacher can show you the correct path, he can teach you how to reach your destination, but the walking has to be done by you. Refer verse no. 18 in this context.] (40).

41. When the mind is trained to have this eclectic wisdom and enlightened thoughts (as narrated in the foregoing verses), it abandons its present habits and natural tendencies, and instead evolves into a higher state of existence which is naturally sublime and blissful, which would naturally help you to realise your true self and true spiritual potentials (41).

42. When you have sufficiently trained your mind, it would not get mired in any sort of worldly Vrittis (natural tendencies of the mind that impel it towards the material world of sense objects) and its attendant problems. Such a mind and sub-conscious are freed from being tormented by any kind of sorrows, miseries, pains and other problems related to this world.

Just like a man cannot be drowned in the water collected in the shallow depression made on the ground by the hoof of a cow, a wise and enlightened man whose mind is free from Vrittis would not at all be affected by the world and its natural miseries,

sorrows and torments. He never gets excited or unnerved by his circumstances; he maintains his cool under all conditions; no adversity is strong enough to disturb his calmness of mind and demeanours (42).

43. Even a Brahmin (i.e. a wise and learned man) who is narrow-minded and short-sighted, who is miserly in his views and thoughts in relation to this world, can get trapped in it and tainted by its faults just like a short-sighted man putting his legs in the dirty water that has collected in the shallow depression made on the ground by the hoof of the cow and getting smeared by the slush in the process.

Just like a mosquito remains trapped and rolling in the filthy water collected in the hollow made on the ground by a cow's hoof, an ignorant man too remains trapped in the world with its miseries and sorrows.

[A Brahmin is usually regarded as a wise and learned person who has studied the scriptures and knows their meaning. But if unfortunately his knowledge is limited to the literal learning of the verses of the scriptures by heart as a means of livelihood without understanding the philosophy behind the teaching of the scriptures, without implementing them in his own life but teaching them to others just to get honour and wealth—then such a Brahmin would fall in the same trap in which an ignorant man falls. A Brahmin who, inspite of having had the privilege of studying the scriptures and being taught of the secrets by expert and experienced teachers, still remains engrossed in the world and attached to its material sense objects inspite of learning that they are inherently entangling and the cause of all miseries and sorrows for the creature, who prefers transient enjoyments and pleasures of the world by sacrificing his long-term spiritual welfare, who forgets that the cause of remaining trapped in the continuous cycle of birth and death is getting involved in this entrapping world, who is tempted by the charms of the world inspite of having the knowledge that this world is deluding and illusionary like the mirage seen in the desert, who does not understand the real meaning of the terms 'non-duality' and 'truth' vis-à-vis the Atma and creation as envisaged by the scriptures, and teaches or preaches others about Dharma and Mukti but never attempts to follow their principles himself—then indeed such a Brahmin would drown in the vast ocean-like world just like a short-sighted man is unable to see the dirty puddle in front of him while walking, and steps right into it, splashing filth all around and dirtying his clothes and body. Here, the term 'filth and dirt' are metaphors for the numerous spiritual faults and corruptions that impregnate the world and are part of it, and the 'dirty water collected in the shallow hollow made on the ground by the cow's hoof' refers to the world of material sense objects. The analogy with the hollow made by a cow's hoof is employed to stress the point that to overcome the world and its temptations is not at all an insurmountable task if only a man has determination and will to do so; there are easily crossable if one is just cautious enough to step aside or just step across it—i.e. cautious and wise enough to avoid it and shun it. This can be achieved by simply controlling the mind, the intellect and the sub-conscious.

Hence, a Brahmin or any other man is considered short-sighted and narrow-minded in the context of this verse if he allows himself to stoop low and his mind to remain hooked to even the most inconsequential of things in this world without bothering for the long-term negative effect it is going to have on his all-round spiritual good. Once he allows himself to be involved with anything related to the world, it is impossible to

remain clean just like it is impossible to remain clean if one steps in the puddle of dirty water.

Such a man would remain perpetually shackled to this world, birth after birth, with no liberation and deliverance in sight. He indeed is 'short-sighted'; he indeed is ill-witted; he indeed is an ignorant fool.] (43).

44. Oh exalted sage (Nidagh)! When one voluntarily, cheerfully and out of his own free will leaves a thing, he would not be attracted to it again or harbour any surreptitious desires for it. It is only then that he can think or look beyond his erstwhile possession.

In other words, when one voluntarily and happily leaves this world and snaps his association with it, then he would not be tempted by the world any longer.

[This is opposed to forcefully having to disown the world and its charms, for then the inner-self would be constantly longing for the world, the sub-conscious would be permanently hooked to the world, and instead of getting peace, the result would be constant mental agony and restlessness caused by endless desires and wishes, by endless passions and lust, by endless greeds and yearnings. It would kill the very purpose of leaving the world in the first place. In other words, renunciation, dispassion and detachment should be natural and borne out of knowledge of the 'truth' based on wisdom, erudition, analytical thinking accompanied by proper and judicious decision making-process. It should not be done just because the scriptures say so, or some teacher has said so—for then the aspirant is bound to fail in his attempts to find real peace and freedom from the worldly miseries and shackles. On the contrary, they would lead to stronger shackles and greater miseries because of suppressed desires and unfulfilled longings.

It is when the mind is fully educated about the given subject or the circumstance it has to deal with, when it is given freedom to think, research, analyse and deduce, and when it becomes dispassionate and non-involved in the result of the decision that it is about to make that it can think rationally and in an un-biased way. So, when the mind is told about the truth of this world and the causes of all the miseries that the creature faces, when it is properly educated and trained to make judicious decisions, when it remains detached from the world, when it recognizes its importance and responsibilities vis-à-vis the future of the creature—it is only then would a man sincerely and honestly renounce the world and free himself of all its associated problems.

When this comes to happen, when a man loses his short-sightedness and miserly views, when his mind stops being selfish in the sense that it stops gravitating towards the material pleasures and comforts of the world, which however are transient and impermanent, in order to satisfy its natural urges, tendencies and passions, and instead prefers to think of the long term welfare of the creature, it is only then that the creature can get rid of the material world that is deluding in the first place, it is only then that he can see the world that transcends this gross material world, and it is only then that he moves in a spiritually uplifting direction and finds the spiritual world where there is no misery and torment, where there is bliss and happiness of the eternal kind.

Therefore, it is only when one leaves the gross world that he can see the subtle and the sublime world that lies beyond it.] (44).

45. Until the time everything gross and inconsequential are not discarded, it is not possible to have the knowledge or acquaintance of the Atma, the pure sublime Consciousness and the Absolute Truth of existence.

When all things gross and inconsequential are eliminated, the only sublime and quintessential entity that is left behind is the Atma (because it is the only ubiquitous and quintessential 'truth' that remains after sieving of the falsehood).

[It is like the process of elimination to arrive at the truth. For instance, when one has to find the reality in a given situation, he would sieve through all available information and discard what is non-relevant and obviously not the reality. It is only then that he would finally be left with the information that actually relates to the reality and which is of any value for him. Similarly, when a wise man sieves through all available data collected by his sub-conscious mind and intelligently analyses them he would be able to discard the falsehood and pick up the truth. He discovers to his amazement that the gross world is not the 'truth' he is seeking, but it lies somewhere else. This is the subtle world of the consciousness, and it is called the Atma. It is the 'truth' that he was seeking. When all falsehoods are eliminated, what remains is obviously the 'truth'; when all grossness are removed, what remains is the subtlety that is devoid of all grossness.] (45).

46. In order to have a divine vision of the Atma (the pure consciousness and the true 'self') it is imperative that the aspirant abandons everything else.

[In other words, one has to be focused on his spiritual goal in life in order to actually attain it. If one wishes to realise the truth of the Atma, he has to discard all non-truths.]

Hence, leave everything from a distance (i.e. do not even think of things that would act as impediments in your spiritual pursuit) because then only the truth known as the Atma would be left.

[When a spiritual aspirant distances himself from everything gross and non-truth, the only thing that survives is the subtle truth, and it is the pure consciousness known as the Atma. Refer verse no. 44-45 above.] (46).

47. Whatever that is seen in this gross world is nothing but an imagination of the mind and its sub-conscious. In fact, there is no pith and substance in it, there is no truth in it. It is merely a vibration of the imaginative mind which oscillates between this and that.

[In other words, this world is just like the world of dreams which is a creation of the sub-conscious but has no real existence. The only difference between this visible world and the one that is seen in one's dreams is that while the former is perceived when the gross organs of perception in the body are activated by means of vibrations sent by the active mind, the latter is created when the role of the active mind is taken over by the sub-conscious when it generates vibrations to create an imaginary world of dreams. In the dreams, the sense organs of the gross body have no role to play. The dreams are basically the creations of the imaginative mind which has the stupendous and amazing ability to 'create' things that have no real existence, and this is why it is called the 'creative mind'. Should the mind decide to take rest, the 'creation' would automatically come to a naught.

The oscillation of the mind refers to the fact that while one world exists when the mind is active, the other world exists when the sub-conscious is active. While the former

is called the world during the waking state of consciousness or the Jagrat world, the latter is called the world of dreams or the Swapna world. The creature oscillates between these two worlds—it either remains awake or asleep. If he is awake, he would go to sleep after some time, and if he sleeps he would wake up again after some time. The living being spends his entire life swinging like a pendulum.

The Upanishad however exhorts him to move beyond and give rest to his mind so that he can see the world that is real and not an artificial creation of the mind, and this world is the world of the transcendental Consciousness, called the world of the truthful Atma. This world is not oscillating between any two states; it is stable and permanent, hence the ‘truth’, because ‘truth’ is always stable and permanent as opposed to falsehood that continues to change every other moment like the simmering mirage of the desert.] (47).

48. Oh Brahmin (i.e. the learned sage Nidagh)! Those who have a well-controlled and trained mind, those whose mind has stopped vacillating and remaining in a state of constant flux, those who have inculcated the noble virtues of equanimity and dispassion—such people are eternally contented and at peace with themselves. They are able to analyse things properly and make judicious decisions dispassionately because their mind is free from any kind of bias and prejudice.

This state of existence of the mind has been defined by wise men as ‘Samadhi’ that is also known as ‘Para Pragya’—the supreme and transcendental state of existence when the mind is not affected by anything of the world, when the aspirant remains completely unmoved by his surroundings, when he is absolutely lost in the subtle and sublime world of the Atma which is pure consciousness and the spiritual ‘truth’ of creation as opposed to the gross world of the sense organs or the one created by the mind, and when he has attained the supreme knowledge of the Atma that is not only ‘truthful’ but also beyond the grossness of the world created by the mind.

It is the state of ‘Samadhi’ or trance-like existence when the mind is completely obliterated and only consciousness exists in its pristine pure state; it is the supreme transcendental state of existence and awareness that is known as ‘Para Pragya’ (48).

49. In this state of ‘Samadhi’ that a seeker has reached on obtaining ‘Para Pragya’ (i.e. when one has become totally indifferent to the artificial world by becoming self-realised and experiencing the presence of the pure consciousness in his own inner-self), there is no trace of any kind of negativity—such as for instance, there are no wants, there are no confusions and doubts and their attendant perplexities and consternations, there is no trace of pride, ego and arrogance. [Rather, it is the state of utmost contentedness, fulfillment and ecstasy; it is a state of high degree of equanimity and broad vision.]

In fact, this type of Samadhi (i.e. the Samadhi marked by ‘Para Pragya’) is more stable than even the mountain known as Mt. Meru¹.

[In other words, the transcendental state of existence called Samadhi that is obtained after one has attained knowledge of the ‘truth’ of the Atma that comes with self-realisation, and which automatically excludes his involvement with the gross world, is a very stable state of existence so much so that no temptations of the world are strong enough to disturb this state and its attendant peace and tranquility, its accompanying bliss and ecstasy.] (49).

[Note—¹Mt. *Meru*—The Meru mountain is also called ‘Sumeru’—the ‘golden one’. The word ‘Meru’ literally means one that reflects light like a mirror or crystal. It is described in the Purans as the fabulous mythological mountain that forms the axis of the whole world. It is much like mount Olumpus of Hindu mythology. All the planets revolve around it. It is compared to the cup or the seed-vessel of the lotus, the leaves of which symbolize the different Dvipas or continents and islands. The holy river Ganges from the heaven on its summit, and from there it divides into four streams and flows down to the rest of the world. The four Lokpals or the custodians of the four directions of the celestial compass occupy the corresponding face of this mountain which is said to be made of gold and glittering gems.

Its height is said to be one lakh Yojans which is equivalent to roughly 8 lakh miles. [1 lakh = 1,00,000 units; 1 Yojan = approx. 8 miles.]

Out of this huge size, 16,000 Yojans (8 x 16,000 miles) is under the ground, and 84,000 Yojans (8 x 84,000 miles) above the ground. On its top there is a flat plateau of approx. 32,000 Yojans (8 x 32,000 miles). It is here that Brahma the creator and his mind-born sons such as Daksha and the Saptarishis live. [refer Mahabharat, Vanaparva, 162; Bhagvata, 5/16.]

It is situated in the mystical Jambudvipa (the huge island by the name of ‘Jambu’), and Bharatvarsha (India) is said to be to its south. The abode of Lord Shiva known as Mt. Kailash, which is presently located in the northern reaches of the Himalayan mountain range, is said to be the same Mt. Meru.

The creator Brahma resides on its summit, and it is the meeting place of Gods, semi-Gods such as Gandharvas, and exalted sages and seers who have attained Brahm-hood.]

50. Oh Brahmin (i.e. Nidagh)! The state of the mind and the sub-conscious when they are fulfilled and contented in every respect is called ‘Samadhi’. [Because in this exalted state, the man would want and seek nothing; he gets such tremendous amount of bliss and peacefulness that he would not bother to seek a lesser amount of these grand virtues by turning towards the world and its material sense objects seeking bliss and happiness.]

This unparallel Samadhi is devoid of all things that need to be discarded, or about which one may have to think twice as to their utility, need and importance as far as the long term spiritual welfare of the aspirant is concerned. It is a stable state of the mind and sub-conscious when all his desires to obtain this and that have been overcome and eliminated for good (50).

51. This highest form of Samadhi is said to have its only origin in the enlightenment and true wisdom that the Chitta (the sub-conscious mind) has obtained. In other words, the true form of Samadhi is obtained when the mind is illuminated (taught; made aware of; wizedened) about the ‘truth’, and thereby becomes highly enlightened.

Those who are well-versed in the eclectic philosophy of the Vedas regard this as the Turiya state of existence (which is the transcendental state). [Hence, Samadhi and Turiya are equivalent to each other.] (51).

52. The Sushupta state (or the ‘deep sleep state) of consciousness is on the threshold of the Turiya state; it precedes the Turiya state and is very close to it.

When the Mana (mind) and Ahankar (ego, pride) dissolve (i.e. when both the mind that harbours ego, and the ego that influences the working of the mind, are made

ineffective, are neutralized) it is then that the aspirant is said to have reached the Sushupta state.

[The Sushupta state of existence is the deep sleep state that comes after the Swapna or the dreaming state of consciousness. It is the third state of existence of consciousness. In this state the mind and the sub-conscious are both defunct. The difference between the Sushupta and Turiya states is that the creature reverts to the Swapna state from the Sushupta state, but when he reaches the Turiya state this reversal does not happen. That is why the Turiya state is likened to Samadhi while the Sushupta state isn't.] (52).

53. In the higher states of realisation when the mind is able to control its self voluntarily (i.e. when all its Vasanas and Vrittis are done away with automatically and without the least effort), it is then that the divine and sublime form of the supreme Consciousness, called the 'Parmatma' or 'Parmaeshwar', makes itself evident to the spiritual aspirant. This vision bestows supreme bliss and beatitude upon him. [That is, the aspirant becomes Brahm-realised when he reaches the higher echelons of self-realisation.]

It is only when the Mana (mind) is fully controlled and diverted towards realizing one's goals in life (which in the present case is his quest for the spiritual 'Truth' and attainment of 'Mukti' or liberation and deliverance for his soul) that one can hope to achieve success in reaching it.

[In other words, since the mind is the only tool available to a man to achieve success in any of his endeavours, so when the mind is under his control and when it sees the futility of pursuing this world would it voluntarily help the man to obtain success in his spiritual pursuits and realise the truth of the Atma, the pure consciousness. A distracted mind would only create obstacles instead of helping the aspirant in any way.] (53).

54. When the mind is controlled and the aspirant has tasted the divine nectar of supreme bliss obtained upon his having the vision of the 'Parameshwar' (i.e. upon obtaining Brahm-realisation), all his Vasanas related to the world and its material sense objects (i.e. all sorts of worldly passions, lust and yearnings for seeking bliss and happiness in the gross material things of the world) are naturally and automatically done away with.

When this happens, the sub-conscious becomes absolutely clean like pure crystal.

[Whatever sensory perceptions the mind receives from the external world are stored in the sub-conscious which acts as a storage and retrieval system for the mind and the intellect. When the mind and the intellect have to make some analysis and arrive at a decision, they draw upon the information stored in the sub-conscious part of the mind which therefore directly affects the conclusion and the decision taken by the creature. Hence, when the mind loses interest in the material world or is turned away from it, the 'Chitta' (sub-conscious and memory) of the creature would be like a clean slate.]

It is in this eclectic state of existence that the 'self', i.e. the pure consciousness that is self-illuminated, begins to reflect in the Chitta. In other words, the mind and the sub-conscious begin to experience the presence of the pure consciousness inside the inner-self of the aspirant once all interference from the Vasanas originating in the outside world are removed. The mind and the sub-conscious begin to shine with the light emanating from the Consciousness that is beyond description. [As long as the mind and

its various components are turned towards the world, being driven by the creature's natural Vasanas and Vrittis, all the taints and negativities so characteristic of this material world are reflected in the mind just like a mirror that reflects the object towards which it is turned. Now, if the same mirror is turned towards a lighted candle or a torch it obviously would reflect their light. Similarly, when the mind is turned away from the darkness of the deluding world and turned towards the light emanating from the pure consciousness residing inside the inner self of the spiritual aspirant in the form of his 'Atma', it is obvious that the mind would reflect the Atma's divinity, its glory and its eclectic qualities.] (54).

55. Everything of any true spiritual worth in this creation is nothing but the Atma, the pure cosmic Consciousness. The latter is endless and eternal; it is steady, immutable, and constant; it has no taints or faults whatsoever. This Atma resides in the inner-self of the aspirant as his 'true self', and externally it is in the all-pervading form that is universal and uniform in this creation.

[The Atma is a sublime and subtle entity that has no grossness and physical form. Hence, it is not visible just like the atom of any given element is not physically visible. But the fact is that the element, such as for instance gold or iron, exist in their physical gross form that is both visible and can also be touched and felt only because of the atom—because it is the atom that has made the physical existence of the element, which in the present example are gold and iron, possible. The atom is the basis of existence of these elements; it is the 'atom' which gives these two elements their unique characteristics and place in the Periodic Table. Both gold and iron are visible, though their atoms themselves are not visible. Likewise, though the Atma is not visible in physical terms like the atom, the existence of the visible world and the life present in it is an ample and incontrovertible proof of the existence of the Atma just like the presence of gold and iron are proofs for the existence of their respective atoms. All things made of gold or iron would have the corresponding atoms pervading throughout the physical structure of all such things. Similarly, all living beings and the existence itself are uniformly pervaded by the Atma; the Atma permeates throughout them.]

The Atma is such a universal entity that besides being the 'self' of the individual creatures it is also the 'self' and the true identity of the Gods. Since it is the almighty entity that rules all living creatures as well as the exalted Gods, it is Brahm, the Supreme Being, himself. It is the 'God of all Gods'!

[The same consciousness is present in the inner-self of any given living being as well as in the form of any given God. Hence it follows that when the aspirant is able to realise that his 'true self' is the Atma and not the gross body, there would be no difference between him and any God. This is the fundamental reason why 'self-realised' ascetics are called 'Brahm-realised', are worshipped, adored and honoured just like one does for Gods, and are given the same honour and respect that one gives to the almighty God, the Supreme Being. The Atma is Consciousness, and Consciousness is known as Brahm. Hence, there is no difference between the Atma and Brahm.] (55).

56. The Chitta (mind and sub-conscious) that is not attached to anything or that does not long for anything is said to be pure, unbiased, detached and dispassionate. Hence, a Jiva (living being, a creature) who has developed such an eclectic state of his Chitta is said to

be free from all the fetters that shackle others to this world inspite of his living in the same world in an ordinary way. [Refer Canto 2, verse no. 12.]

[This is obviously called 'Jivan Mukti'—literally meaning to be free from all bondages pertaining to this world while one is still alive and living a normal life in this world. Such a man does all things required of him, but never gets emotionally and mentally attached to either the deeds or their results. No temptations of the world are strong enough to break his resolve and to affect his dispassionate state of mind.]

On the other hand, if a man is internally hooked to the world and its material sense objects, if his Chitta is not free from its Vasanas and Vrittis (natural attractions for the world and its charms, comforts and pleasures) then no matter how much effort he spends in doing Tapa (austerity and penance) for a long period of time to seek Mukti (liberation and deliverance), he would never find it; Mukti would always elude him (56).

57. A Jiva (a living being) whose inner-self is free from all attachments or entanglements with anything in this world, or who has no relations with anyone whosoever, is deemed to be a Jiva freed from all fetters and encumbrances. Such a Jiva has a cheerful disposition and pleasant manners.

[This is because he treats everyone and everything alike without having any bias for and against any of them; he does not favour anything or anyone, nor is he prejudiced against them. The result is that he has no enemy or friend, he has no fear from any quarters, and he treats every circumstance with stoic equality, remaining unruffled and poised under all situations. With exemplary calmness and poise comes an equally high measure of internal peace and tranquility that shows in his thoughts, behaviour and temperament. He would treat everyone with equal compassion and kindness, thereby endearing all around him. He would readily share his possession with others and would even give others something they need without having a second thought, thereby contributing to a positive and friendly environment of brotherhood and love around him where gracefulness, compassion, caring and sharing are the dominant norms. Obviously there would be no jealousy and ill-will that are generated when one is narrow-minded, selfish and greedy.]

He might be doing deeds as demanded by his destiny or circumstances, but internally he is so detached from them and their results that he does not think himself to be either the doer of deeds or the one who would be entitled to the fruits of the deeds done.

[Basically this means that he has realised that his 'true self' known as the Atma is not the one that is doing anything at all, rather it is the gross body which is merely a habitat of the Atma and not the person's truthful identity. Since all the deeds are done by the body which is not the 'self', the question of the 'self' as being either the doer of deeds or the enjoyer or sufferer from the result of the deeds done does not arise. Since he has become dispassionate and detached from the 'inside', i.e. his inner-self and the sub-conscious mind is not involved in anything, it does not matter whether or not he does any deed 'externally' with his gross body. This is true Mukti—because if the inner-self and the sub-conscious are attached to the world then even if a creature does not do anything he still is deemed to be bonded to this world.] (57).

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About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

Genre of Writing: Spiritualism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Religious, Devotional and Theological.

The author's Books are available for order online both in 'e-book' format and 'paper-back book' format at following websites—

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Contact details of Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia—

Postal address:-36-A, Rajghat Colony, Parikrama Marg, P.O.—Ayodhya, Pin—224123, Distt. Ayodhya (Faizabad), U.P. India.

Phone:—(India) +919451290400; +919935613060.

Website: < www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com >

Email of Author: (i) < ajaichhawchharia@gmail.com >

(ii) < ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com >

Archive.org: < https://archive.org/details/@ajai_kumar_chhawchharia >

Facebook ID < www.facebook.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia8 >

Linkedin: < www.linkedin.com/AjaiKumarChhawchharia >

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